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JUNE 1949

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## CONTENTS

PAGE

THE UNIVERSITIES *Michael Oakeshott* 515

IS A NEW HISTORY OF CRITICISM POSSIBLE?  
*E. M. W. Tillyard* 543

SAMUEL SMILES AND THE GOSPEL OF WORK  
*Asa Briggs* 552

BOOK REVIEWS 562

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JUNE 13

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JONATHAN CAPE

## THE UNIVERSITIES

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT

## 1

CRITICS of the universities have appeared in every generation. The criticism has come from within and from without; from teachers, from taught and from the great and often ignorant world. It has ranged from malicious detraction to the quiet consideration of manifest defects which has been the source of all fruitful reform. And it has concerned itself with every level of the life of the universities. The book before me,<sup>1</sup> the latest addition to this library of criticism, is the result of a communal enterprise: a group of like-minded men and women (a self-appointed working-party), at meetings spread over the last two years, has considered what before then had been recognized as the critical situation of the universities, and Sir Walter Moberly has attempted to 'crystallize the interim results' of those discussions. The group has found a spokesman who has most of the necessary qualifications; his knowledge of British universities is great and spread over a long period, his mind is vigorous and he conforms to Thomas Arnold's dictum that 'no one ought to meddle with the universities, who does not know them well and love them well'. His is by no means an indulgent love, and there are moments when he seems to go out of his way to display an erratic and ill-considered severity. But the result is a book which deserves to be studied.

The critic, however, calls forth criticism. Only a blind and trivial loyalty would resent Sir Walter's diagnosis of the shortcomings of British universities at the present time, only an unnatural fixity of mind would find nothing to reflect profitably upon in his suggestions for improvement, and one would have to be very insensitive to remain untouched by the tone in which the book is written. Yet in each of these respects something remains to be said; and if it is said clearly and with as little beating about the bush as may be, it will perhaps be recognized as a contribution to the discussion and not mistaken for an alien and unfriendly voice. But first a limitation must be observed. The book is 'written from a Christian standpoint', but it is no part of my project to investigate this standpoint, except to say that the particular form of Christianity which appears here is not everybody's Christianity; indeed, it seems to me exceedingly eccentric. And it is possible to say something relevant about the book without considering its standpoint, because much of what it

<sup>1</sup> SIR WALTER MOBERLY: *The Crisis in the University*. S.C.M. Press, 15s. net.

has to say is independent of its Christian predisposition. This does not mean that the Christianity of the book is merely peripheral to its argument; indeed it is made clear that, in the mind of the writer, both the diagnosis of the crisis and the suggestions for reform and certainly the tone of the book, spring from Christian conviction. But it is recognized that something more precise and detailed is needed than an exhortation to become Christian, and, courageously, 'back to the Christian tradition' is placed among the spurious remedies of the crisis.

[ Briefly, the argument of the book is as follows. We are living in an age of exceptional crisis: our condition is one of extreme physical, emotional and intellectual insecurity. As the result of a long history of discovery and invention we are already possessed of immense power, and the process which gave us this power continues unabated. This power, unavoidably, is in the hands of the few; 'a decision in the Kremlin or the White House may revolutionize the lives of millions'. Some people, intoxicated by the sense of power, see in this situation an opportunity which, if it can be exploited, may lead to the conquest of even death itself. But the power is already so great that it is felt by the ordinary man to have itself taken charge of his life, and consequently his dominant experience is one of hopeless physical insecurity. At the same time, and springing partly from the same cause, our world-picture has been shattered, we have lost our sense of direction and in our uncertainty we have become emotionally and intellectually 'displaced persons'. 'The beliefs which govern men's actions are in flux.' This is the greatest of the recent changes that have come over the world in which we live, but it is not the only one. The other significant change is that which is indicated by the word 'democracy', which among its multifarious implications involves the disappearance of anything in the nature of a ruling class: any man may find himself among those who control the available power.

In the past, the universities in this and other European countries have usually reflected the world in which they have found themselves, and they have often provided for some of the needs of that world. The universities which Newman and Paulsen described, the one exemplifying the then current Christian-Hellenic tradition and the other the tradition of Liberal education, were each adapted to their worlds. Consequently we ought to consider what, if anything, the universities of contemporary Britain are doing 'to adapt themselves to a world of insecurity'. In some respects our universities reflect the changes that have already taken place, though the relics of adaptations to conditions now past distort and qualify this reflection. But when we ask, further, Are our universities providing anything to assuage the crisis of our time? the answer is that they are doing



nothing. Virtually no attempt is made to provide the mental and spiritual security which the undergraduate needs and desires. Not only is he given no 'answer' to his questions, but he is not even incited to find an 'answer' for himself. 'Most students go through our universities without ever having been forced to exercise their minds on the issues which are really fundamental.' 'Owing to the prevailing fragmentation of studies' the minds of undergraduates receive no encouragement to achieve an integrated view of the world: the university has become a polytechnic. And the fragments are presented in a way that 'shirks the fundamental issues', with the consequence that the undergraduate remains as 'uneducated' as his teachers, but being younger is less complacent about it. This dismal failure is the 'crisis in the university'.

The current remedies for this situation are found on investigation to be spurious. A return either to the tradition of 'classical humanism' or to the Christian tradition as it was in the past, is impossible; and even if either of these traditions were successfully revived, it would leave the universities out of touch with the contemporary world. 'Classical humanism' is 'bound up with a society based upon privilege' and is 'deficient in catholicity since it has little room for natural science and underrates its significance'; and a university enclosed within 'a Christian institutional framework would be so divorced from the opinions of the majority, that it could only be set up by force or by dexterous diplomacy'. And the remedy suggested by what is called 'scientific humanism' (the view that the world's chief need today is further technical advance and that the sought-after integration is to be found in this enterprise which itself requires no custodian), while it deserves serious consideration, is incomplete and less plausible than it was ten years ago. To overcome the crisis, therefore, nothing short of a revolutionary change is necessary, a 'drastic Metanoia'. The whole aim and basis of the university must be investigated; its curriculum of studies, its methods of teaching, its way of life and its relationship to society must be reconsidered if the 'deep-seated disabilities' from which it now suffers are to be removed. This task is of the greatest urgency; the sands are running out.

## 2

The major premiss of this argument is the alleged critical character of the times in which we live: 'for the history of civilization, the years round 1950 are critical in a degree to which the years round 1850 or 1900 were not'. We must, then, consider first the interpretation of the crisis which is set before us. Two world-wars, the invention of the atomic bomb and the presumed existence of a will to use it, have brought us to the edge of an abyss — so the diagnosis runs.

We are in the situation of the inhabitants of Herculaneum and Pompeii in the summer of the year A.D. 79. And our activity is not crippled by the apprehension of impending disaster only because 'our imaginations have not kept pace with our reason'. The young, however, are less deluded: there is a whole generation which has not got the normal expectation of life — and knows it. 'Many a student's life is dominated by *Angst*.'

Now, this is an unfortunate start for the diagnosis; what is merely incidental — indeed, what is trivial — gets all the emphasis. (The degree of physical security one needs is very much what one is accustomed to, and we are getting accustomed to very much less than was normal fifty years ago.) In spite of its sensitiveness to what the young are thinking, this book springs from a mind which is accustomed to a far greater degree of security than the young know anything about. And further, intellectual and spiritual stability is not a mere function of physical and social security; indeed, it often happens that the kind of self-questioning which shakes a man to his foundations has a background of quite undisturbed physical and social security. No man has ever been more worried about himself than Matthew Arnold in 1849, but few enjoyed greater 'security' than he did at that time. The fact is that nobody with firm beliefs is going to lose any sleep on account of a diminution of his expectation of life, and nothing is less relevant to the firmness of his beliefs than the mere length of a man's life. The shadow of the atomic bomb here obscures the diagnosis.

But there is something more in Sir Walter's mind, something of which the bomb is only a symbol. 'The sensational triumph of applied science in the last two or three centuries, bringing with it a quite new power of transforming the conditions of life, is one of the great turning-points of history': we possess immense power but lack discrimination in its use. And the crisis here is the absence of discrimination and the consequent feeling of being controlled by something we have created. The threat is not merely to individual existence, but to what we call 'civilization'. And the suggestion is that 'civilization can be saved only by a moral and intellectual and spiritual revolution to match the scientific, technological and economic revolution in which we are now living'.

(But even on this wider view, the reading of the situation is, I think, at once too alarmist and too optimistic. The tone of this book is one of desperate urgency; it has the hysterical atmosphere of a revivalist meeting.) This is all very well if you are trying to save a man's soul or convert a drunkard, but in this sense civilizations cannot be 'saved', they cannot take the pledge and from that moment never touch another drop. If one looks round the world today, the overheated imagination can find a dozen reasons for dismay, but if any-

thing is certain it is that the collapse of our civilization will not come from any of the things which get into the headlines — not even from soil erosion. There will always be writers who like to frighten the human race; they used to write books for school-boys, and were better employed doing so. Moreover, the identification of God's purpose (to speak in the Christian idiom) with the survival of our particular way of life is scarcely permissible. Of course we shall defend it with all our strength; that belongs to the way of life: but a world-picture which is merely a projection of victory is of little value at a time of crisis or at any other time. In short, desperate urgency is something that belongs to a scale of events much smaller and less important than the scale Sir Walter has in mind [at bottom I find this a peculiarly faithless book.] And further, a more profound diagnosis of our situation (such, for example, as appears in F. G. Juenger's book, *Die Perfektion der Technik*) would offer no place for the optimism that supposes that a 'revolution' can be conducted which would 'save' us. When what a man can get from the use and control of the natural world and his fellow men is the sole criterion of what he thinks he needs, there is no hope that the major part of mankind will find anything but good in this exploitation until it has been carried far enough to reveal its bitterness to the full. This, as we shall see in a moment, is not an argument for doing nothing, but it is a ground for not allowing ourselves to be comforted by the prospect, or even the possibility, of a revolution. The voyager in these waters is ill advised to weigh himself down with such heavy baggage; what he needs is things that will float with him when he is shipwrecked. Our situation, as I read it, is far more desperate than Sir Walter thinks, and at the same time it is far less to be alarmed about. And as for the bomb; no doubt we must consider it, but we should not allow it to unnerve us or we shall work ourselves into the state of mind which wishes that 'they would drop the damned thing and get it over'. In any case, the havoc wrought in Eastern Europe in the last few years is as bad as any atomic devastation; a powerful mass of deluded human beings is far more destructive than any bomb.

At bottom, of course, the crisis with which this book is concerned is not external, but emotional and intellectual. And even those who do not read the Sunday papers are aware of something that might be called critical in our situation. But it should be remembered that we have acquired excessively high standards, not only of physical and economic, but also of emotional and intellectual security, and judging our state of mind by these standards, we are apt to imagine in ourselves an altogether abnormal lack of coherence. If we are a generation which 'lives in an habitual consciousness of a world about to fall in on it', that is partly because we have unduly raised our

standard of security. We look back at earlier periods in the history of our civilization and ascribe to them a world-picture far more coherent than they actually possessed, and by grossly exaggerating the emotional and intellectual stability of, for example, the Middle Ages or the nineteenth century, we attribute to ourselves a fictitious degree of insecurity. Other ages, no doubt, possessed more reliable habits of behaviour, but 'a clear image of the ends of human existence' has never been enjoyed except by a few rare individuals. And the notion that we are all at sea because as a society we have not got it, and that we should lay aside everything else in order to acquire it, is a piece of rationalistic exaggeration.

## 3

It is a sound rule in considering an argument to look closely at the minor premiss; that is the point at which most arguments go astray. The minor premiss of the argument of this book concerns the relationship between the university and the world, and it is not as clearly stated as one could wish. The university, it appears, should reflect the world; and from this point of view the 'crisis in the university' is its failure to do so. When we ask, What is this world which is to serve as a model? the answer we get is that it is a 'large-scale, mechanical civilization', that it is a 'democratic' world, that it is a world in which 'the sheer pace of events' has made 'planning' a necessity, that it is 'a world of insecurity', that intellectually and spiritually it is a world which has lost its confidence and sense of direction, and that it is 'explosive'. It is not denied that the universities have to some small extent succeeded in adapting themselves to this sort of world. In order to conform to the model, the whole balance of university studies has already suffered so great a change that what is new and 'in touch with the vital ideas of the age' has made the old pursuits of literature, philosophy and history 'seem secondary, remote and ineffectual'. Moreover, 'the essential part played by scientists in winning the war', combined with the incipient 'democratization of the universities', have 'produced in the public mind a more lively and sympathetic interest in the universities and a new sense of their value to the nation'. The process of adaptation has been slow, hesitating and inconsequent; but it has begun. To make the universities a reflection of the world means that 'the basic assumptions of the universities must be those of the nation', it means that they must have a 'more lively understanding of the major communal needs and of the significant communal changes actually occurring'—it means, in short, that the universities must accept and extrapolate the tendencies of the time.

[Taken by itself, this ideal of a university which reflects fully and accurately the world as it has come to be is, of course, nothing better

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than an unconditional surrender to the absence of discrimination which, elsewhere, is taken to be characteristic of the world today. A world moved by the plausible ethics of productivity is willing to endow the universities in order that they may co-operate in the good work of carrying the 'crisis' a step further. And the business of the universities is to conform to the conditions of the endowment. The world is 'explosive', therefore the universities should explode. This clearly is a trifle too naïve a view of the relationship of university and world, and consequently a second duty is promulgated: the duty of providing 'leadership'. This duty is interpreted as something more than merely that of being the first to explode. It is the duty of providing a new world-picture, an ideology to give us back our confidence, a gospel to save the world from itself. To perform this second duty the university must be relieved from the immediate pressure of the world; its inspiration must be something other than the way the world is at present going.

Now, this dual relationship of the university and the world raises an obvious question which, so far as I can find, Sir Walter never considers: the question, What happens to this judicious scheme if the relation of reflection and the relation of guidance conflict with one another? (My own view of the matter is that the conflict today is absolute; but without insisting upon that, there is a remarkable absence from this book of any attempt to establish an even plausible harmony between the two. And this incoherence affects the argument at many points. Two examples may be given. Consider the relationship between 'the student' and the university as it appears here, leaving on one side for the moment the extraordinary portrait of 'the student' which emerges. It is suggested that today the undergraduate looks up and is not fed. A variety of reasons is given for this failure, but in interpreting it this book never decides whether it is because the undergraduate's alleged search for certainty, for a philosophy of life which the world does not provide, is left unprovided also in the university, or because the undergraduate comes with a mind already filled with the prevailing philosophy of indiscrimination and finds the university out of touch with his already formed conclusions. Either of these is a plausible reason for discontent; you may lack guidance and find in the university a hesitating and indecisive guide, or you may find in it an imperfect reflection of what you have already taken to be your guide or of your own mental instability, but the two states of mind are exclusive of one another. You may say, 'Out there in the street something new is in the making, which will shatter all the syllogisms and formulae of the schools; conform or get out of the way', or you may say, 'Out there in the street is chaos, please help me to distinguish the good from the bad' — but you cannot reasonably say both at once. 'In order to be useful

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to the community', says Sir Walter, 'the university must retain a large measure of autonomy against the community', and he hopes that by calling this a 'paradox' he can have the best of both worlds. But it is not paradoxical at all: on the one view of the relationship of university and world it is clearly false, on the other it is a truism.

The same incoherence runs through the treatment which the doctrine of 'scientific humanism' receives in this book. This doctrine (which, it may be observed, is a doctrine *about* science and technology and is not itself in any sense 'scientific') is obviously attractive to Sir Walter because it appears to combine both views of the relationship of university and world. In the first place, it is a doctrine which directly reflects 'what is most vital in contemporary culture', and its defenders wish to carry out to the full the desired adaptation of the university to the world. And secondly, it is a doctrine which appears to offer an alternative to the prevailing intellectual chaos; it provides 'integration'. And on account of both these characteristics it is found to have 'high merits'. The 'scientific humanists' are said to have been 'more responsibly awake than the rest of us to the significance of the changes in the modern world, to revolutionary possibilities of human control of events, and the relation of what goes on in the university to what goes on outside it'. They are praised for their 'social conscience'. And yet 'scientific humanism' is placed among the 'spurious remedies'. It turns out to be a naïve assertion of the plausible ethics of indiscriminate productivity, a simple-hearted worship of power, an innocent bowing down before the mighty course of events. It turns out to have no criterion for helping us to know when we are not hungry. But why was this not recognized at first? Why all this elaborate falling over backwards in order to find merit in what is worthless? Because, I think, Sir Walter has confused himself by trying to hold on to two conflicting purposes, and because he is unable to distinguish between doctrine and rhetoric. The *doctrine* of 'scientific humanism' in respect of the universities is the acceptance, without misgiving or qualification, of the view that 'the basic assumptions of the university must be those of the nation', the view that a world wedded to the enterprise of limitless technological improvement should have co-operative universities. And this conforms exactly to Sir Walter's first demand. The *rhetoric*, on the other hand, is that of discrimination — though the values are studiously ambiguous — bigger, faster, more democratic, international, a freer kind of freedom, the universities in alliance with 'all the forces making for social progress'. And this seems to satisfy Sir Walter's second demand. But in fact, it is only a rhetorical satisfaction: this is not a moral doctrine, to be considered in relation to other moral doctrines; it is the assertion, disguised in the rhetoric of a moral ideal, that moral judgment is unnecessary.

What is the point of this?

The 'scientific humanist' is not awake to the significance of changes in the modern world; he is merely awake to the changes. This is not a new situation; it is as old as the race. What man needs from the natural world is what he thinks he can get from it. In itself there is nothing moral in this process of exploitation; if it is to be moral it has to be moralized, and morality is being in command of the situation, is being able to discriminate, is knowing when you are not hungry.

In the long run, no doubt, universities will always come to be some sort of a reflection of the world in which they exist. They cannot be insulated from that world, and the world is likely to have the final voice. A war, a Royal Commission, a Barlow Committee, a specific benefaction, a government grant, each involves the approximation of a university to something in the world outside; pressure is continuous and no pressure is neutral, no gift is without strings, and the politician loves the unseen string. But merely to be in the fashion and to accept what comes is no very exalted ideal, and a university which has power to refuse a benefaction thought to be eccentric to its character must, when it exercises that power, have some sense of its own character and identity. This character may change, it certainly has changed, but what is to be avoided is change of such a kind that the university loses its sense of identity. [The doctrine that the university should move step for step with the world, at the same speed and partaking in every eccentricity of the world's fashion, refusing nothing that is offered, responsive to every suggestion, is a piece of progressive superstition and not to be tolerated by any sane man.] Keeping up to date with the world is, then, an ideal which is subject to two important qualifications: the world must offer something which at least seems to be desirable as a model to be copied by an existing university, and the activity of approximation must be carried out in a manner that does not entail a loss of identity. Opinions may differ about our present situation. My own view is that the contemporary world offers no desirable model for a university, and that the current activity of approximation is lacking, not in speed, but in discrimination. [Sir Walter's opinion appears to be that not to move with the times is itself a significant failure. He deplores the fact that those who are 'in tune with the movement of ideas in the contemporary world' are so small a number in the universities; the 'new scientific culture' would have already gone much further if it had been properly welcomed. And he thinks that now is the time to stage a revolution which shall at the same time rapidly bring the universities up to date and fit them to provide what the world lacks.

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There can be little doubt that much of the incoherence of this book springs from the fact that the argument is a communal product; too many different views have had to be incorporated and each with some sort of approval. And while we may pass over minor inconsistencies (and a certain amount of ordinary silliness), there are more important blemishes which call for notice. Every page of the book testifies to an unqualified belief in the value of criticism and self-criticism. The project of uncovering everything, of thinking out afresh the whole aim and basis of the university with a view to making a new start, is regarded not merely as desirable but as a necessity if we are to have a lively and responsive institution. Not to embark upon this project is to be guilty of 'sloppy thinking' and 'conventional prejudice'. There will be many who have no difficulty in consenting to this opinion, and, for the sake of argument, I am prepared to accept it. But it must be observed that there are occasions in this book when the desirability of being awake and responsive to what is going on are interpreted in so extreme a manner that one is reminded of Godwin's wish to make his blood flow voluntarily. Nobody would be so foolish as to deny the value of a critical attitude towards things, but surely it is a little wanton to say that 'ceaseless criticism, from without as well as from within, is necessary for the university's health': *ceaseless* criticism never did anyone or anything any good; it unnerves the individual and distracts the institution.

But the thesis of the book does not stop there; not only is criticism necessary and revolution essential, but we are told that *now* is the moment for the inquest and the reform. Undergraduate education has never been thought out as a whole, it has been shaped by the pressure of circumstances and not by clear thought directed to definite ends; but now is the time to embark upon this piece of thinking and to set on foot the changes necessary to implement its results. And, not unreasonably, we look for some convincing arguments in support of this remarkable view. There are, I think, two possible arguments, either of which would be pretty convincing; if it were shown that the universities at the present time were hopelessly corrupt, a danger to themselves and to the whole society, or if it were shown that the present time offered remarkably good prospects for fruitful reform, the case for radical reform now could be considered to have been established. The book, on the whole, relies on the second of these arguments. It is true that we are told that the time at our disposal is short — which takes us back to the atomic bomb or to soil erosion. But the general point of view seems to be: because the world is upside down, it is the most profitable moment to turn the universities inside out.

The precise arguments which appear are instructive: there are two

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of them. It is suggested, first, that this is the moment for the enterprise of university reform because it would be carried on the great wave of 'social planning' which at the moment is sweeping us forward to a new and better world. We have at the moment a clearer idea of what we mean by 'social needs' and 'social justice' than ever before, and consequently the time is ripe to apply it to the universities. [This, if I may say so, is nonsense; the current interpretation of 'social needs' is narrower, more eccentric and less coherent than it has been for centuries.] And if it were true, what becomes of all this talk of a civilization which has lost its sense of direction? Sir Walter takes what we call 'planning' as evidence of vitality and confidence, but it may with more justice be taken as a symptom of our absence of direction and our loss of dependable habits of behaviour. But the second argument is more important because it is one of the most mischievous fallacies passing for sense at the present time. We have just emerged from a state of total war, therefore (the argument runs) it is the most favourable moment for carrying out profitable reforms in every part of society. Years ago, Karl Mannheim told us that 'by making the necessary adaptations to the needs of war one does not always realize that very often they contain also the principles of adaptation to the needs of the New Age', and ever since every reformer in a hurry has disingenuously taken up the cry: every crisis is hailed as a God-given opportunity to remodel society. And we are told here that the task of adjusting the universities to the world, the project of taking the universities to pieces and putting them together again, may most profitably be undertaken now because we have just emerged from a war. And further, we are told that our experience of war is the most reliable guide to the activity of university reform: 'the analogy of wartime experience suggests that, to get the most out of a university, it must be enrolled in the service of some cause beyond itself'. This is the disintegrating politics of the 'Dunkirk spirit'.

Now, we cannot too often remind ourselves that, in politics and in every other activity, war offers the least fruitful opportunity for profitable change: war is a blind guide to civilized life. In war all that is most superficial in our tradition is encouraged merely because it is useful, even necessary, for victory. *Inter arma silent leges* is an old adage which can support a wide interpretation; not only are the laws suspended, but the whole balance of the society is disturbed. There are many who have no other idea of social progress than the extrapolation of the character of a society in time of war — the artificial unity, the narrow overmastering purpose, the devotion to a single cause and the subordination of everything to it — all this seems to them inspiring: but the direction of their admiration reveals the emptiness of their souls. [Not only is a society which has just emerged

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from a shattering war in the worst possible position for making profitable reforms in the universities, but the inspiration of war itself is the most misleading of all inspirations in such an enterprise. If there is anything left standing with even a moderate degree of stability (and Sir Walter admits, rather grudgingly, that there is greater stability in British universities at the present time than in any others), let it remain for the moment; it is something to lean upon. To set about adjusting the universities to a world in chaos will make certain that they will be approximated to all that is most trivial in our tradition. Every proposal for change which springs directly from an emergency is unavoidably governed by what is temporary and accidental.<sup>1</sup> Nor is this mere theory: the major 'adjustment' which the universities have already suffered, which has resulted in the desperate overcrowding of the present time, has done them more damage than any 'failure to meet the needs of the time'. Oddly enough, Sir Walter pays very little attention to the 'crisis in the university' which springs from the altogether excessive number of undergraduates,<sup>2</sup> and he assumes that every unprejudiced man will agree with the findings of the Barlow Committee. There is, then, no harm in thinking about the true aims and basis of a university, though the present prospects of reaching profitable conclusions are dim; but beyond question this is the worst of all moments for promoting radical changes to bring the universities into line with what is going on in the world. In the end, the only plausible argument in favour of choosing the present time for such an enterprise is the current political argument that, in a world so chaotic a small addition to the disorder will scarcely be noticed, and if things go wrong circumstances are waiting to take the blame.

## 5

We have observed already the general terms of Sir Walter Moberly's reading of the 'crisis in the university': it springs from the slowness with which the universities of this country are adjusting themselves to the changes which have taken place in the world outside, and from their failure to provide the necessary guidance. It is time now to consider this diagnosis more closely. The condition of the universities is said to be one of chaos. They do not know 'what they are for', and they have never thought about the matter. They offer a moderately efficient education in various specialisms, but since there is no point in the university at which a synoptic view of the intellectual world is attempted, or even suggested, the prevailing appearance is that of a miscellaneous collection of fragments. Nobody is incited to want (much less, to acquire) 'a unified conception of life'; nobody

<sup>1</sup> This is the main reason for the eccentricities of the Forestry Commission.

<sup>2</sup> *The Problem of the Universities*: Nuffield College Report.

is given any assistance to 'decide responsibly on a life purpose'. The universities, being without any self-conscious, single view of the world, offer no 'overmastering experience'.

The cause of all this is not far to seek: it lies in the intellectual and moral disabilities of the dons. Except for the 'scientific humanists' — who are approved, not for what they say, but merely because they speak — there is a conspiracy of silence on all the important questions of the day. The dons are mere specialists; they have no 'philosophy', and they are reluctant to engage in the sort of self-examination which might lead them to acquire a 'philosophy'. Self-defeated simpletons, they do not recognize that to say nothing about things in general is 'a mark of personal incapacity'. And worse, they excuse their lack of interest in anything but their own specialisms by affecting a sham neutrality when asked about anything of 'real importance'. They are lazy, pusillanimous, evasive, irresponsible shirkers when it comes to thinking about 'the burning questions of the day'. Those who are not 'elegant triflers' are too dull to play even that unexacting part. Indolent, proud and resentful, their lectures written and unwilling to change them, their minds fixed in the rut of their specialism, they are as 'remote and ineffectual' as the world has always supposed them to be.

Now, what is to be thought of this indictment — when the necessary allowances have been made for exaggeration? I think Sir Walter's shots may be considered to compose a moderately compact group, but unfortunately they are on the edge of the target. As we shall see later, he scores one 'bull', but since it falls so far outside the group it detracts from the total effect. In other words, this indictment springs almost inevitably from Sir Walter's assumptions, but its strength is limited to their cogency. What these assumptions are appears in the remedy proposed.

The inspiration of the remedy is the belief that any university which is without a single self-conscious purpose, inexorably pursued, must be failing in the task of being a university. It is impossible for a university to plan its studies or its corporate life except by reference to some standard of values, and 'it is impossible to have a rational standard of values in the absence of any clear image of the ends of human existence, and that entails some conception of the nature of man and of the world'. And a university whose 'working philosophy' is surreptitious 'will be wanting in intellectual honesty'. This inspiration, of course, makes certain that nothing will be recognized as valuable which is not self-consciously present; what is not expressly designed to be there may be assumed to be absent. And consequently, in my opinion, we start on the wrong foot, with the assumption that we were born yesterday and that the universities are without the advantage of traditions or a sense of their own character. But further, it brings

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us up against that most difficult problem of 'planning' — the difficulty that nothing can be decided until everything has been decided. If you cannot determine the 'correct number of nurses' until you have determined the correct number to be employed in every other occupation, how are you to make a start? Aristotle solved the problem centuries ago by pointing out that no sane man ever goes about anything in this manner; he does not assume a blank sheet, and he is not such a fool as to suppose that he cannot enjoy his porridge, or even educate his son, until he has solved the riddle of the universe. But Aristotle is now among the less frequently read writers; for two centuries we have gone to school instead with the Germans — the only European people which did start more or less with a blank sheet and became philosophers before they had learned how to live — and we have come to believe in the preposterous doctrine that you must first catch your *Weltanschauung*. However, it seems clear enough that 'when we turn to the primary questions, concerning the things that really make or mar a university, and ask, What are universities for? What effect should they have on their alumni? What are their responsibilities to the outside world? we are asking questions to which a minority of university teachers return discordant answers and the majority return no clear answers at all'. And consequently the remedy must be a revolutionary change.

Now, mixed in with this doctrine of the necessity of revolutionary adjustment under the guidance of a self-conscious purpose, there is in this book another doctrine to the effect that 'the clue to reconstruction is to be found in our tradition'. How these two can be made to agree, I cannot say; but the treatment which the traditions of British university education receive here accounts for the small reliance Sir Walter places upon them. A chapter is given to an examination of what is called 'the changing conceptions of the university's task'. But a recognizable university never appears on the scene, because the hiatus between the formulated conception of a university — as expounded by Newman or Whewell or Paulsen or Matthew Arnold — and the sort of education a university has actually provided at different times, is never observed. These 'conceptions of the university's task' are all very well in their way, but it is forgotten that they originate nothing except an illusory sense of understanding what it is all about, and the actual university escapes between the lines. Theories of this sort may be contrasted neatly with one another, they may be said to 'displace' or to 'supersede' one another; but a history of theories is not a history of university education: neither Newman's nor Matthew Arnold's university (any more than Feudalism or a *laissez-faire* economy) ever existed. And to contrast a university as it exists today with a theory of what it was yesterday or the day before, is to institute a comparison be-

D. S. Wood, M. A. (1911-12) (1911-12)



tween things which do not match one another. The real reason why a movement 'back' to any of these 'conceptions of the university's task' is impossible, is not because they are out of date, but because they never existed. We have today, says Sir Walter, 'a chaotic university', but by focusing his attention on theories he has concealed from himself the fact that there never was anything else but a chaotic university. This, I think, is the reason for his misinterpretation of what he calls the tradition of 'Classical Humanism': for him it is a 'conception of the university's task' in which 'the function of the university was to train a ruling class' and to provide for 'those professions which have, or used to have, most social prestige'. Because he sees it only as a theory (it is even so emasculated that it is made to exist independently of the Christian element in European civilization), the tradition of 'Classical Humanism' is said to be 'bound up with a society based upon privilege'; he even pictures Oxford and Cambridge as engaged until yesterday in educating a 'leisured class', and finds that this great education in Christian-Classical culture somehow conflicts with 'the unsatisfied demands of social justice'. With the bogus boldness of those who say, 'These things have come to stay; we must accept them', this book too often surrenders to all that is worst in the current disingenuous cant. It suggests that by putting 'social' in front of 'justice' something significant has been said, it accepts the current identification of unselfishness with equalitarianism and it extends an indiscriminating approval to all those who claim to be allied with 'all the forces making for social progress'. And what is this leisured class? It appears to be the class of Peel and Gladstone, both of whom, it is well known, led lives of ease and indolence. The notion that it is something new that the vast majority of undergraduates leaving the universities have to earn a living is pure fantasy, and the suggestion that those who do not earn their living unavoidably engage in worthless activity is preposterous. Indeed, the pages in which the university education of twenty, fifty or a hundred years ago is discussed are obscured quite unaccountably by a sense almost of guilt.

Given the diagnosis of the chaos and the inspiration of the remedy, the character of the remedy is obvious. A university, if it is to fulfil the task assigned to it, must abandon its shy neutrality, overcome its inhibitions and acquire 'a recognizable and conscious orientation'. The discussion of 'ultimate questions' of 'real intellectual issues', of 'the burning questions of the day', from being considered improper, must be recognized as a fundamental responsibility. Nothing should be taboo. And further, 'there must be some point in the university' where the necessity of acquiring a 'philosophy of life' is urged upon the undergraduate and where he is given the necessary help to acquire

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one. At the present time he is directionless and leaderless; the university should see to it that he is given an idea that 'grips' him. He desires to be saved by a momentous experience; the university must provide the experience, an experience such as J. S. Mill describes as coming to him from reading Bentham: 'I now had opinions and a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy . . .' Instead of remaining merely a polytechnic (which is what it has degenerated into), the university must provide a synoptic, integrated view of the moral and intellectual world, it must 'teach a unified conception of life'.

Now, all this looks like a plea for what we are accustomed to call an ideology, and the appearance seems to be confirmed when we read that the 'recognizable and conscious orientation of the university' should 'take the form of a common moral outlook or *Weltanschauung* which sees the challenge of our time in personalist rather than technical terms, which, though not specifically Christian, is "christianized" in that it has been deeply influenced by Christianity, and which is a basis on which Christians and large numbers of non-Christians can work cordially together'. Elsewhere, however, the project of a university designed to put over an ideology is disclaimed — 'it is no part of the duty of a university to inculcate any particular philosophy of life. But it is its duty to assist its students to form their own philosophies of life, so that they may not go out into the world maimed and useless.' But for two reasons this disclaimer is unconvincing: first, the whole view put before us — briefly, that every man without a philosophy of life is 'maimed and useless' — is itself an ideology and one of the narrowest and most absurd; and secondly, it is clear that Sir Walter thinks we should be better off if we had an agreed ideology which embraced everything, if we had a precise answer to every question and a neat place for every experience. A coherent system 'reminiscent of St Thomas's *Summa*' is, alas, at the moment impossible, but it is represented as a legitimate 'long-term objective'. How revealing is this nostalgic backward glance to an imaginary world from which chaos had been excluded. And how stupendous is this misunderstanding of the *Summa Theologica*, turning it into what a recent writer has called 'a sort of staff-college doctrine', which it never was except in the minds of the ideologues. The magnitude and importance of the 'issues' and 'questions' to be discussed in the university is frequently impressed upon us in this book, but we are left in some doubt about their precise character. Indeed, like the novelist who, writing of 'orgies of unimaginable vice', convinces us that he has an innocent imagination, Sir Walter never leaves the high road of generality. The 'master question', round which the university should revolve, appears to be, 'How shall a man live?' and I suppose it is not an exaggeration to speak of this as 'fundamental'. How profitably it can be discussed, and what sort of an



answer may be expected, is another matter. But in default of more exact specification, one is left with the impression that under the new regime the universities would degenerate into that most worthless of all conditions — that of a forum for the discussion of ideologies. And as for these 'burning questions'; I suspect they are the sort which give a faint flicker round about midnight and have burnt themselves out by the next morning. By all means let them be discussed, but let us also be aware of their triviality: no question is inherently 'burning', and the most probable way of making an important question trivial is by hotting it up.)

A variety of means by which this remedy may be applied is offered in this book. Obviously what will be needed is a more responsible and a more articulate sort of don, and the case for tests and terms of subscription is examined with some care. In the end they are rejected, with the proviso that if one is a member of an appointments committee one should not give one's vote to a candidate whom one suspects of bad faith or intellectual dishonesty. An enhanced community life for students, such as may spring from properly organized halls of residence, and extended means of communication between staff and students in different faculties, are expected to promote the purpose ascribed to the university. But the main emphasis is on the reform of the curriculum of studies and the methods of teaching. There should be widened professional courses (so that the doctor should be taught something about 'life' as well as about medicine), Honours Schools combining more than one subject should be developed, the possibilities of 'broad-based general Degree Courses', such as exist in American universities, should be explored. But, above all, in the effort to integrate the fragmentary specialisms of the contemporary university, there should be single integrating courses of lectures, which 'pose to the students the problems of a philosophy of life, and, it may be, offer a solution'. Sir Walter is, in general, sceptical of the value of lectures, but allows them merit if they possess a 'dynamic quality'.

Now, within the assumptions of this book, these are all sensible suggestions. The main assumptions are: that there is only one good sort of university education — a didactic training in the current ideologies with a view to selecting the best; that there is only one good sort of university — that which has a single, clearly defined, self-conscious purpose; that there is only one good sort of communal organization — that in which students live in halls of residence or colleges; that there is only one good sort of don — the man or woman who is intensely interested in 'the burning questions of the day' and is capable of being articulate about them, a Hippias Polyhistor;<sup>1</sup> that there is only one good sort of student — the man or woman who is in-

<sup>1</sup> PLATO: *Hippias minor*, 368.

interested in 'problems' and who wants a 'philosophy of life'; that there is only one good sort of lecture — the 'dynamic' sort; and that it may be safely assumed that unless a purpose is consciously pursued it will never be achieved. [It is a remarkable performance for so liberal a mind: one may only conclude that he has dwelt so long on one thought that it has taken him prisoner.] Consider the view that unless you expressly aim at something it will never be achieved. Nothing could be more manifestly false as a generalization. Those who look with suspicion on an achievement because it was not part of the design will, in the end, find themselves having to be suspicious of all the greatest human achievements. The doctrine that a thing either does not exist or at least is worthless if it is not planned, and that unforeseen consequences of activity are a sign of failure, is a piece of extravagance. Consider the don and the student. It appears from these pages that not to be interested in a *Weltanschauung*, indeed not to be interested in politics, is a sure sign of incapacity in the one and dullness in both — and at one stroke the best and the worst of the human race are written-off as a dead loss. As it happens I am interested in these things, but I know that there are others, much better educated than myself and much more reliable members of society, who never give them a thought. To impute irresponsibility and evasiveness to these people is arrogant folly. [The current almost universal speculative interest in morals and politics is not a sign of health and is not a cure for the disease we suffer from; it is only a symptom of disorder.] And it seems never to have occurred to the author of this book that one of the effects of all the planning of the universities of the last twenty-five years has been to make certain that a man such as Lowes-Dickinson can never again exist in Cambridge; the destruction that has gone on in the name of integration is lamentable. Consider these 'dynamic' lecturers. A university would be poor if it had no preacher, and a preacher who is inspiring is worth more than one who is only instructive. But he will never be the most valuable member of the university. And if there is a quack about the place, if there is an intellectual crook, you may be certain that he will not lack dynamism; I should have thought we had had enough of that dangerous quality for the time being. Anyone who knows anything about a university knows that even the meanest has room for a dozen different sorts of lecturer. And when I look back upon the great teachers I have heard — to Burkitt, Lapsley, Coulton, Cornford, McTaggart — none of them was dynamic and only one cared a straw about a *Weltanschauung*. I would rather listen to Bury 'drone from a dull manuscript in a voice inaudible beyond the front two benches', than to a self-conscious quack retailing some vulgar and trivial message. Consider, lastly, the notion that the best sort of university is one in which the students are housed

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in colleges or halls of residence. Anyone who has spent his undergraduate days in Oxford or in Cambridge knows the great value of a residential university; it is something that belongs to our tradition and we know how to manage it. But anyone who has experienced (for example) life in the university quarter of a German town, knows the value, even the blessed relief, in *not* belonging to a tightly organized community, and that it is an unpardonable prejudice to suppose that, in this respect, there is only one good sort of university. Let us have none of this fanaticism.

## 6

No one can hope to say anything significant about the universities unless he understands that university education is neither a beginning nor an end, but a middle. Hobbes's pronouncement that 'the instruction of the people, depends wholly, on the teaching of Youth in the Universities', is not true, and he ought to have known better than to have made it. No man begins his education at the university, he begins it in the nursery; and a man's formative years are not at an end when he takes his degree. The character of a university is, therefore, in part determined by the sort of undergraduate who appears — not, of course, by the idiosyncracies of individuals but by the assumptions that may safely be made about the general run, about their age, their intellectual standards, their moral upbringing and their ambitions. The main difference between British and American universities springs from the difference between British and American homes and schools. Of course, universities have some control over the sort of undergraduate who appears, but it is a limited and a remote control. Hitherto (until yesterday), in spite of great changes, the universities of Britain had something valuable to offer which the undergraduates who appeared in them could make use of because it was rooted in, generally speaking, accurate assumptions about the sort of undergraduate who would appear. What they had to offer was not something which only one social class could appreciate, or something suitable only to a 'leisured class'; undergraduates who came with a variety of tastes, bents, predispositions and ambitions could find in what was offered something recognizably appropriate to themselves.

The university offered, in the first place, a limited variety of studies. Where this particular selection came from, it would be hard to say. Probably no one of these subjects of study was capable of defence on *a priori* grounds; no university ever drew up the curriculum with a known and adequate reason for every entry. Some of these studies were of distant origin and owed their place in the universities to quite different reasons from those which could now

be used to defend them. (For example, the place and importance of Classics in the school and university education of the sixteenth century was mainly on account of the positive knowledge contained in the writings of Greek and Latin authors; they were *modern* studies.) Others were comparatively new and could still be defended on the grounds which had won them their place. Certainly none of these studies was designed for any purpose so definite as to fit a 'ruling class' to rule or a mercantile class to conduct business. Indeed, the only character common to them all was that of being a [recognized branch of scholarship.] And this was true also of the three studies which had a professional appearance — theology, law and medicine. For in the universities these were not a merely professional training; they were a preludial education to which apprenticeship elsewhere had to be added. They did not survive because of the 'social prestige' of the professions with which they were connected, but because each of them, like every other study in the universities, was a recognized branch of learning. And the new subjects which had been added from time to time, claimed entry on the ground that each involved standards of scholarship comparable to those of the subjects already admitted. An undergraduate, then, if he wished it, could find in the studies offered at the universities something at least not remote from his chosen profession; and if he had made no definite choice, he could find something to interest him, or, if he had the tastes of a scholar, something to captivate him. Each of those studies was a specialism, but none was a very narrow specialism. There was, in general, no heated discussion about the relations between these special studies, chiefly because (except to those with speculative tastes) each was easily recognized as belonging to the single world of learning. Looking back on it, the impression I seem to have received (though I did not then embody it in this image) was that of a conversation in which each study had a distinctive voice — a conversation which occasionally degenerated into an argument (e.g. between 'science' and 'religion'), but which in the main retained its proper character. Nobody then gave lessons in the art of conversation itself; that was to be learnt by listening to the conversation (an activity for which it was assumed the undergraduate had already been prepared), and only a Sophist would have considered the art of conversation to be a separate τέχνη. The university was neither an institute in which only one voice was to be heard, nor was it a polytechnic in which only the mannerisms of the voices were taught. There was, then, an atmosphere of study; each undergraduate was pursuing, within the range of his own capabilities, some recognized branch of learning. The small number of undergraduates who came to the universities for reasons altogether extraneous to study may be disregarded. Some provision was made for them, they were not

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by any means valueless members of the society, but they did not profoundly influence the curriculum of the university.

Secondly, the British university offered a field of extra-academic activity within the traditions of British life; clubs and societies to which succeeding generations belonged, the opportunity of forming new associations, the room and the means of pursuing a great variety of interests, social, athletic, artistic, religious and scholarly. Here too the undergraduate could follow his taste or ambition according to his means and exercise his energies; here also was an inheritance to be enjoyed. And of this no more need be said.

But thirdly, the university had something to offer equally to every undergraduate, and I take this to be its most characteristic gift because it was something exclusive to the university and rooted in the character of university education as a middle. A man may at any time in his life begin to explore a new branch of learning or engage in fresh activity, but only at a university can he do this without a rearrangement of his scarce resources of time and energy: in later life he is already committed to so much that he cannot easily throw off. The great and characteristic gift of the university was the gift of an interval. Here was an opportunity to put aside the hot allegiances of youth without the necessity of acquiring new loyalties to take their place. Here was an interval in which a man might refuse to commit himself. Here was a break in the tyrannical course of irreparable events; a period in which to look round upon the world without the sense of an enemy at one's back or the insistent pressure to make up one's mind; a moment in which one was relieved of the necessity of 'coming to terms with oneself' or of entering the fiercely trivial partisan struggles of the world outside; a moment in which to taste the mystery without the necessity of at once seeking a solution.<sup>1</sup> Here, indeed, was the opportunity to exercise, and perhaps to cultivate, the highest and most easily destroyed of human capacities, what Keats called *negative capability* — 'when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason' — an opportunity to practise that 'suspended judgment' of which the 'neutrality' of Liberalism is so pale a shadow. And all this, not in an intellectual vacuum, but surrounded by all the inherited learning and literature and experience of our civilization; not as a sole occupation, but combined with the discipline of studying some recognized branch of learning; and neither as a first step in education, for those wholly ignorant of how to behave or think, nor as a final education to fit a man for the day of judgment, but as a middle.

It would be difficult to determine the generation of this remarkable opportunity; certainly nobody planned it or even considered it in the

<sup>1</sup> PLATO: *Laws*, 888.



abstract. [It was a by-product.] Perhaps it sprang (as Lucretius imagines human limbs to have sprung) from there being people who, in varying degrees, could make use of it. At all events, I think it was the one thing which every university in Europe, in some measure, provided, and in virtue of which, more than of anything else, it was a university.] The enjoyment of it depended, of course, upon some previous preparation (no man ignorant of what he should have been taught in the nursery could expect to enjoy it), but it did not depend upon any definable pre-existing privilege or upon the absence of the necessity of earning one's living in the end — it was itself the privilege of being a 'student', the enjoyment of σχολή. One might, if one were so inclined, reduce this to a doctrine about the character of a university; one might call it the doctrine of the interim. But the doctrine would be no more than a brief expression of what it felt like to be an undergraduate on that first October morning. Almost overnight, a world of ungracious fact had melted into infinite possibility; we, who belonged to no 'leisured class', had been freed for a moment from the curse of Adam, the burdensome distinction between work and play. What opened before us was not a road but a boundless sea; and it was enough to stretch one's sails to the wind. The distracting urgency of an immediate destination was absent, duty no longer oppressed, boredom and disappointment were words without meaning, death was unthinkable. And it seemed as if desire had resolved itself into the original, undifferentiated appetite from which it sprang, and that limitless energy was again let loose. Of course, this appetite would have to surrender its formlessness and this energy find a direction; but there was time enough for that: the interim was ours. For the moment we were able to step aside from the brittle formulations of the world, from the current vulgar estimates of its predicament, from the 'burning questions' and the world's slick answers. But it belongs to the character of an interim to come to an end; there is a time for everything and nothing should be prolonged beyond its time. The eternal undergraduate is a lost soul. It was possible that, in the end, we were better able to deal with the world, it was possible that the knowledge we acquired could be converted into power, but these were not the motives of the experience nor the criteria by which its value should be judged. Indeed, I think the experience could never come to anyone who had already subscribed to that most dismal of all sentiments: *scientia propter potentiam*. Contentment, says Fuller, 'is the one property which is required of those who seek the philosopher's stone; they must not do it with any covetous desire, for otherwise they shall never find it'. This university did not turn out men who had completely come to terms with themselves, men who had 'settled' all their problems. It recognized and had a place for minds that were

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not and never would be *problematisch*. A man in his undergraduate days might be expected to discover the triviality of some 'problems', he might hope to have enjoyed, some time or another, a glimpse of the vista which, we suppose, terminates in 'a clear image of the ends of human existence', but if he had a settled 'philosophy of life' in his pocket on the day he took his degree, it was to be supposed that he had come by it improperly.

Now, there are various ways in which a crisis may overtake a university of this sort. First, if there was no longer anybody who could appreciate and make use of what it offered, such a university would find itself without undergraduates. This, I think, is an improbable state of affairs in England in the near future. Anyone who has worked in a contemporary overcrowded university knows it to be an illusion that there was any large untapped reserve of men and women who could make use of this kind of university but who never had the opportunity of doing so. But, so far as my observation goes, it appears that there are about as many as there ever were (but no more) to whom the gifts of such a university seems valuable. How long this will continue to be so is doubtful; the way things are going is not friendly to the existence of this sort of undergraduate.

Secondly, if such a university were flooded with undergraduates who were unprepared and had no use for the opportunities it offered, or if there were men abroad who had the power and the intention to destroy, by one means or another, such a university, it would not be unduly alarmist to proclaim a state of crisis. This needs to be considered carefully, because a crisis of this sort has ceased to be a mere possibility. Let us first investigate the character of the contemporary undergraduate. It cannot be said that Sir Walter Moberly gives us anything but an incoherent picture of him. Leaving aside the allegation that he is essentially *problematisch*, that he has a longing for 'certainty' about this world and the next and above all about himself, what are we told? We are told that he 'knows more' than his predecessor, that he is 'more highly selected', that 'on the average he is more able', that he is 'potentially better material'. There is, of course, a certain ambiguity here, but in general it may be said that this is emphatically not true. If he 'knows more' it is only in respect of some relatively narrow specialism, on the average the contemporary undergraduate is not 'more able' than his predecessor, and the tests by which he has been selected are not those which have much bearing upon his ability to make use of the sort of university we are considering. But further, not only is this picture, on the whole, false; it is contradicted by the rest of what Sir Walter has to say. For we are told that the modern undergraduate 'has not the background of culture which could once be assumed', that his 'range of interest is more circumscribed', that he has 'little initiative or re-

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silience', that his aim is 'utilitarian', and that he looks upon the university 'first and foremost as the avenue to a desirable job'. He is said to be antipathetic to the sort of detachment which the universities have cultivated; and the 'abler and more altruistic' among them, 'the leading students' are eager to engage in the affairs of the world and to turn study into politics. Some of this Sir Walter falsely ascribes to 'pressing material preoccupations'; but whatever the reason for this alleged change of character, the result is manifestly an undergraduate who is less able to make use of the sort of university we are considering. Nor is this all. From the outside we have men of power who desire that the universities should be flooded with exactly this sort of undergraduate, whose character they admire; they have the intention of transforming the universities into places designed and planned to provide what these undergraduates suppose they need. Here, I think, is the makings of a genuine crisis in the universities. For when the pressure for change in this direction becomes irresistible, the universities will suffer a destructive metamorphosis from which recovery will be impossible. The problem today is *not* 'how to translate the ideal of the cultivated gentleman into democratic terms and combine an intensive and relentless pursuit of excellence with a new sensitiveness to the demands of social justice'. In the past a rising class was aware of something valuable enjoyed by others which it wished to share; but this is not so today. The leaders of the rising class are consumed with a contempt for everything which does not spring from their own desires, they are convinced in advance that they have nothing to learn and everything to teach, and consequently their aim is loot — to appropriate to themselves the organization, the shell of the institution, and convert it to their own purposes. The problem of the universities today is how to avoid destruction at the hands of men who have no use for their characteristic virtues, men who are convinced only that 'knowledge is power'.<sup>1</sup>

There is, however, a third direction from which a crisis, or something like it, may overtake a university: if the universities, in respect of matters still within their own control, were ceasing to offer what they had hitherto given. Here Sir Walter has something relevant to say, and a little that is helpful. He sees a danger in what he calls 'the overloading of curricula'; and there can be no doubt that this would be destruction of the sort of university we are considering. It is not a matter entirely within the control of a university — almost the whole of the alien pressure from which the universities suffer is in this direction — but something could and should be done to ease the burden. But Sir Walter's diagnosis is imperfect, and he gives the wrong reason for thinking that the current excessive demands

<sup>1</sup> ERNEST GREEN: *Education for a New Society*.

on the undergraduate are evil. First, what he objects to is merely the overloading of the *specialist* curricula; he wants to add what he calls 'integrative courses of lectures', which, though they appear to be 'compulsory', for some obscure reason he does not regard as increasing the academic burden. And secondly, an overloaded curriculum seems to him an evil, not because it prevents a university offering its most precious gift (though he does say that it reduces the time available for the undergraduate to 'stand and stare'), but mainly because it gets in the way of an adequate discussion of ideologies and leaves no time 'to explore by-ways'. Now, the undergraduate in the past usually knew how to deal with an official curriculum; he took the initiative on his own account. He knew that being an undergraduate did not mean attending 'courses of lectures', and the universities with the surest traditions never encouraged him in the belief that it did. And in this respect Sir Walter greatly undervalues the examination system, which, as an alternative to the practice of 'getting signed up for attending a course', gives a greatly added freedom to the undergraduate in the disposition of his time and energy, and automatically lessens the evil of an overloaded curriculum. But as usual, Sir Walter wants the moon *and* sixpence: 'obviously the happy-go-lucky system, or absence of system, of Mid-Victorian Cambridge can furnish no model for today', but 'it contained an element of great value which . . . is in danger of being squeezed out'. However, from the point of view of the sort of university we are considering, it may be agreed that an 'overloaded curriculum' is a sign of failure.

The other important point at which a university may be thought to desert its true path is if in its hands the world of learning degenerated into a set of miscellaneous specialisms. This is what Sir Walter believes to have happened. He thinks that each specialism is now explored and taught more efficiently than it used to be, but that virtually no attempt is made to explore the whole to which they belong. I do not think that this is the truth of the matter, and it is disconcerting to find that one of the few efforts the universities have made (in face of considerable pressure in the other direction from the outside) to put a term to this disintegration is attributed to jealousy and laziness: I mean the care usually exercised before a new specialism is allowed to enter the already congested field. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that this disintegration is something we suffer from at the present time and that it is destructive of the sort of university we are considering. And if Sir Walter's remedies — 'integrating lectures', wider Degree Courses and Combined Honours Schools — are thought to be either wide of the mark or themselves a surrender to the disintegration, we should not use his errors to absolve us from considering the matter.

The first thing to be said is that what Sir Walter detects as a flaw in contemporary university education is, in fact, the most difficult of the current problems of philosophy: a century of pretty intense thought has already been given to it without much result. Certainly we should like to see the world of knowledge assume the appearance of unity; but for the present this is one of those things upon which we have to exercise our negative capability. And to expect a university to provide an integration in its curriculum is asking for dishonesty: an integration which sprang merely from an emotional necessity could not fail to be a false, a trivial, a worthless formula. And a man who cannot do without certainty in this matter would be better advised to apply his mind in some other direction.

However, on the level of undergraduate education there is something that may be done to relieve the situation. The notion of 'broader-based general degree courses' may be dismissed in this connection; it provides a bogus solution by circumventing the problem. A university should, however, in the first place, select the specialisms which it offers for undergraduate study so that there is some chance that each may be seen, even by the undergraduate, as a reflection of the whole. The pressure to provide a technical training for a great variety of professions makes this difficult, but a university of the sort we are considering will disappear unless it is prepared to resist this pressure. The notion that it is somehow illiberal and obscurantist to exercise discrimination in this matter is preposterous.

The failure for which the universities may legitimately be blamed is not the failure to find and put over a formula to integrate its specialisms, but a failure to be sufficiently selective with regard to the specialisms themselves. Secondly, it is the business of this sort of university to teach at a profound level the various branches of the world of learning which it has chosen to offer to the undergraduate: the real defect of a specialism does not spring from its failure to be the whole, or its failure to know its place in the whole to which it belongs, but when it succeeds in being no more than superficial within its own limits. It would be absurd to expect that every faculty in a university should have the same high standard of excellence or that it should show no variation from time to time in its achievement in this respect. It takes time to acquire a standard of excellence, which is not to be confused with a readiness to keep up to date with the latest items of knowledge and to incorporate them in a syllabus.

The world, which does not understand these things very well, for long enough has been pressing upon the universities, regarded as institutions designed to teach undergraduates, a crux which, unwisely, they have recently shown signs of taking seriously. The question we are asked to decide is, whether the purpose of university education

*specialized*  
*general*  
*integrating*  
*specialism*

is to acquire knowledge of some specialized branch of learning, connected perhaps with a profession, or whether it is for something else *besides* this. The world will accept the answer that it is for both purposes, but it then wants to know what part of the curriculum is designed to achieve the second purpose; and, in our eagerness to show that we are not doing nothing about it, we begin to talk of 'integrating courses' and of 'culture'. Our real mistake does not lie in a failure to answer the question convincingly, but in the confusion of mind which allows the question to be properly formulated. The objects of education, it may be said, are to enable a man to make his own thought clear and to attend to what passes before him. The advantage which Antisthenes claimed to have got from philosophy — 'the advantage of being able to converse with myself' — is the chief advantage a man may hope to get from education. These objects, however, are not abstract mental capabilities; to make one's own thoughts clear and to attend to what passes before one is indistinguishable from participating in and handling the civilized inheritance of our society. So far as specific teaching is concerned, our sort of university proposes to achieve these objects by means of the close study of a particular branch of learning. And the ground for this method is the belief that no true and profoundly studied τέχνη raises the distinction between acquiring a knowledge of some branch of learning and pursuing the general objects of education. This belief would have less to recommend it if the university were supposed to give a man some sort of final mental equipment or if a particular university were an institute in which only one τέχνη was studied; but the university we are considering has never been either of these things. The condition that a τέχνη must be 'true' is necessary because there are clearly some specialisms which, the more profoundly they are studied, carry a man further away from the objects of education; the τέχνη χρηματιστική is one of these, and 'culture' is another, and I believe that, if the integration of specialisms assumed the character of a separate τέχνη, it would also belong to the class of bogus specialisms; it would be the art of conversation taught to those who had nothing to say. Each 'true' τέχνη is, or involves, a particular manner of thinking, and the notion that you can think but without thinking in any particular manner, without reference to some definite universe of discourse, is a philosophical illusion. Every 'true' τέχνη, profoundly studied, knows something of its own limits, not because it possesses a comprehensive knowledge of its context and not because it knows everything or has some abstract scheme or key to everything (it cannot have these things while remaining a τέχνη), but because it has some insight into its own presuppositions. And when to this is added, as it is added in a university, the presence of other special studies, unless somebody

raises the dust, the invitation to conversation is compelling. In short, the problem of integrating the world of knowledge is a profound and difficult one, but the fact that we do not at the present time see our way through it does not destroy the possibility of a university. The universities have traditions which they may call upon, traditions of discrimination in what they offer for study to undergraduates and traditions of thoroughness of study, and it would be a great mistake to neglect these in favour of an integration generated *ab extra*. The world of knowledge never has been integrated by a *Summa*, and those who urge us to look for it in that direction are unreliable guides whose immoderate thirst has conjured up a mirage.

There was once a building which had been constructed by many hands and over a long period of time. Its architecture represented many different styles, and it so far conflicted with the known rules of construction that it was a matter of wonder that it remained standing. Among its inhabitants were connoisseurs who possessed plans. Some went so far as to claim that their plans were those of the original designer, for in spite of the evidence of their eyes they believed that every building must have an architect. Others among the connoisseurs claimed no more than that their plans represented what the building should have been like. These plans were kept in a room apart and from time to time the collection was added to, some of the additions coming from distant countries. None of the plans bore any noticeable resemblance to the building itself; but they were assiduously studied by the connoisseurs. A few people took the view that the time and scholarship expended on these plans was excessive; they preferred to inhabit the building itself — not because they found every part of it equally convenient or had no projects for improvement, but because they had learned to understand it and to love it. One day a cry of 'Fire' was heard in the building. The connoisseurs ran at once to save their plans; in the building itself they had little interest. It turned out, however, that the fire was, in fact, in a neighbouring bakery and that there was more smoke than flame. But the inhabitants of the bakery fled to the building, and the connoisseurs took the opportunity, while others were extinguishing the fire, to show their plans to the refugees, who, of course, were much interested. They were easily convinced that the building itself was greatly inferior to the plans, and promised the connoisseurs to assist them in the project of demolishing the building (which they had always considered unsightly) and of reconstructing it according to one of the plans. The plan they particularly favoured was one that had recently been received from a remote part of the world.



## IS A NEW HISTORY OF CRITICISM POSSIBLE?

E. M. W. TILLYARD

Is a new history of criticism possible? — the question presupposes a favourable answer to another question: are histories of criticism desirable? And not every lover of literature thinks they are. True, some interest in critical theory arises naturally in the minds of most people who have any real use for literature; usually when they are young and when new general ideas have a powerful attraction. The old basic questions of art and morality, of the differences between verse and prose forms, of the relation of content and expression, start up fresh and exciting to every new generation. But, the young enthusiast is apt to ask, what has our interest to do with *history*? What we want is the *truth*. This we can get better today than in the past, because we know more than our predecessors. We are just beginning to understand how the human mind works; and aesthetics is a department of psychology. Why, when we are so much better equipped, grub up man's painful and broken approximations to truth through the ages? What of any value can Aristotle and Sidney teach us that has not been incorporated in contemporary theory? Let us go straight to the whole truth or to the maximum portion of it available up to date.

The answer is that applicable to all attempts to get the quickest returns in life, to take life in unnatural concentration. And it is that in the end they fail, because they ignore the natural processes of digestion and assimilation. Except for the tiny fraction of people with a natural gift for theorising, critical theory, in itself, however thrilling at the outset, soon gets stale. And one is forced to the conclusion that most critical theory, for prolonged interest, needs a setting in time to support it.

Further, once critical theory is set in time a double process is generated. Seen in its historical setting critical theory comes alive; seen through critical theory the setting takes on new significance. You can understand and relish the critical theories of an age if you relate them to the literature of that age; and you can see what that literature is getting at if you understand under what critical suppositions it was created. And not only that. The very theory itself, apart from its contemporary application, acquires an interest *through* that very application. For illustration take the Renaissance and Augustan theory of decorum; more especially the theory that certain kinds of diction are suited to certain unalterable literary kinds. Here is a matter that at first sight is pretty well dead; something

outmoded, irrelevant to contemporary production, and in its theory rudimentary. Yet if you bring it in contact with contemporary production it acquires a new life. Consider it in connection with Milton's lines on Hobson, with *Paradise Lost*, and with *Samson Agonistes*. Those lines on Hobson, with their rough rhythm and quasi-metaphysical wit, have sometimes been thought exceptional and alien to Milton. Actually this roughness is governed by contemporary ideas of decorum as strictly as are the epic sonorities and sustentations of *Paradise Lost* and the dignified yet less sustained rhythms of *Samson Agonistes*. Hobson was a homely character, and to celebrate him as for instance Dryden celebrated the memory of Oldham would have been indecorous. Or take Dryden himself. Read his own defence of the style of *Religio Laici* and consider the different styles of that poem, of *Annus Mirabilis*, and of the *Secular Masque*. What happens through these considerations? First, the theory comes alive because we see that in its own age it meant something. Secondly, some of the literature becomes clearer because we see the literary theory actually influencing production. But still a third thing happens. Through seeing how the theory of decorum worked in the seventeenth century we apprehend a living example of the general problem of how formal means should be used to meet certain mental ends or requirements.

The moral is that no piece of critical theory, however dead apparently, or irrelevant to present production, is uninteresting, provided it was really dominant and influential in its day. You can no more bring an indictment against a dominant critical belief than against a whole people.

Now if critical theory as seen in time is interesting, and if the history of criticism deals with critical theory as seen in time, the history of criticism has an initial chance of being interesting too.

But here someone might interpose: aren't you making a very sweeping and dubious assumption, namely that a history of criticism concerns the history of ideas about literature and not the history of the criticism of the texts? What about Addison on *Paradise Lost* and Coleridge on the beauties and defects of Wordsworth? The answer is that of course you could treat the extant examples of literary appreciation historically, but that such a history would be a much more patchy, a much less connected, and a much less interesting affair. Apart from a chunk of Aristophanes and a few spots of Plato, Longinus and Quintilian, there is practically no eminent literary appreciation in classical criticism: it just cannot compare with the amount of good critical theory. What I am debating is whether a new and living history of criticism is possible; so I confine my survey to the portion of the subject where the possibility is highest.

As far as I know, there has been only one history of criticism, that



of George Saintsbury. The recent work of J. W. H. Atkins, though it may have corrected a number of errors and brought together new arrays of fact, does not make the historical impression. It is a survey rather than a history. What is it that makes Saintsbury's work a history? First, Saintsbury is highly personal and hardly at all objective; and for the continuity required for the historical illusion the steady pressure of a definite personality is a great advantage. Secondly, he does apply some definite if limited standards. Most of his history is of course learned gossip (once amusing) about the various critics. But Saintsbury was a disciple of Pater, a man of the 'nineties. He believed passionately that literature should please not instruct, that the subject was irrelevant, only the manner counting. And he applies these beliefs to the critics' writings from the beginning to the end of his book. When he wrote, those beliefs were alive; and it was that life that made his book worth writing and interesting in its own day.

Now to write a history of *all* the questions of critical theory that have ever interested mankind would be to run to impossible length, while no man could make it interesting because it is only a fraction of these questions that would have a vital interest for himself. I conclude therefore that the only history of criticism that can really qualify as such must concern those questions of critical theory that are most alive when such a history is written.

If that is a correct conclusion, the intending historian of criticism must first decide what are the ruling questions of literary criticism today.

Saintsbury wrote in an age of unexampled literary individualism, when public morality had least to do with problems of art. What mattered in a given work was its unique quality or flavour, the thing that made it different from all other work: and Pater called this quality a work's *virtue*. Not only were separate works of art unique rather than partly coincident with others; but the artistic process was disconnected from all other processes, and artistic morality had nothing to do with any other morality. This individualizing and separatist trend was not the only one, nor was it universally accepted. There co-existed, for instance, the tradition, usually fathered on Taine, of merging the work of art in its general setting of thought, while Matthew Arnold and Courthope were acutely aware of the public as well as of the private and personal nature of a work of art. None the less the individualizing trend was dominant.

Now today, though critics would never deny the unique element in every work of art, they are much less exclusively interested in it than they were; and the trend has been to associate aesthetic matters with other matters in life. One of the militant reactors against the separatism of art was I. A. Richards, whose root-doctrine was that

the psychological constitution of art was no different in quality, and only different in degree, from the mental experiences derived from eating one's dinner or stroking a cat. Having outlived its initial iconoclastic thrill, the theory has no longer much emotional appeal, but it truly illustrates a wider trend of thought. Another change has been in the relation of art and morality. Although no one now would agree to consider poetry as versified preaching, there is no hostility to Renaissance doctrines of art as conducing to virtue by showing men acting nobly, and as averting vice by showing wicked men punished. Further there is now pervasive if often tacit and unformulated support for there being some connection between art and ethics. In this support, however, I doubt if there is much *positive* enthusiasm.

No, it is two rather different forms of this general associational trend that have the most emotional force today. First, there is the belief that no man's aesthetic theory is worth much unless it is a connected part of a wider philosophy of life, and from this belief comes the critical question of how this connection can be and has been made. And second (but really included in the first question) is the position of art and hence of the artist in society and the state.

I therefore conjecture that a history of criticism today should consist of an exposition, based on the latest research, of the opinions of the chief literary critics through the ages held together and made continuous by special attention to the above two questions. You cannot omit this wider exposition, for readers will go to a history of criticism for information, but you can make it liver and more acceptable as well as more continuous by dealing with special themes, by, as it were, giving this information the peculiar colour-blend belonging to those themes of critical theory that most live in men's minds today.

Such a method is bound to affect the emphasis put on the different critics; and the first thing to do is to guard against any assumption that the resulting emphases are wholly right in the sense that the greatest emphases will go to the greatest critics. For instance, I fancy that on the suggested hypotheses Samuel Johnson will get less than his usual emphasis and Benjamin Jonson more. Samuel Johnson's brilliant biographical perceptions, his flair for the great man, and his exposure of critical shams have not any very exciting connection with the place of art in society. But Ben Jonson's fragmentary critical dicta, most of them derivative and yet so thoroughly adopted and adapted as to be quite his own, and his characteristic theory of comedy, are in vital contact with more general opinions on life. Nevertheless Ben Jonson's greater aptitude to present requirements is only temporary and does not turn him into a greater critic than his later namesake.

One result of the proposed new criteria is that different kinds of evidence will be used. Aristotle is one of the critics who will suffer no

diminution of emphasis; and yet on what different grounds will his importance rest! At first sight he does not touch the question of the place of art in society and he establishes no linking up of poetry with ethics comparable to that of politics and ethics. We have been used to putting Aristotle's eminence in quite other terms: in those of his astonishing success in propounding the right critical questions and of his penetrating though as yet simple psychological insight into artistic processes. Indeed at first sight his critical method is more that of the scientist than of the philosopher. And yet by what he assumes and does not say he offers powerful testimony to the importance he believed the arts to hold in life. His testimony can best be perceived through contrasts. Consider the connotations of two pieces of Romantic criticism: Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* and Carlyle's section in *Heroes and Hero-Worship* on the hero as poet. Shelley makes magnificent claims for the poet's importance beyond the apparent province of his own work. The poet is one of the legislators, though unacknowledged as such, of the world. But there is something febrile in the way the claim is made: arguing not only the author's tendency to febrility but a genuine apprehension about the artist's place in contemporary society. An indifferent or hostile audience evokes a heightened and importunate tone. Carlyle, seeking to exalt the great poets to the eminence of the great men of action, somehow strains his voice and in so doing betrays the uncertainty of his cause. Now Aristotle does not arrogate to poetry any place of unusual exaltation; he simply takes it for granted as one of the concerns of the rational civilized human being. There is no need for him to justify it in relation to politics, for it is an instinct, based on two appetites as fundamental to human nature as the gregarious instinct, the appetite for imitation and that for harmony and rhythm. There is nothing in criticism to compare with this Aristotelian tone of certainty. And the reason is that he is just and only just old enough to belong to a society inheriting an unbroken tradition of art as a necessary activity of that society as a whole and, in whatever way, of each individual of it. Plato, it must be noticed, attacks art not for any lack of universality but because the admitted instinct on which it is founded is low in the hierarchy of the brain.

Take for a second example another classical critic, Longinus. Interest in him has centred mainly in two things: his exaltation of the passions and the brilliant perceptions contained in some of his remarks on classical texts. We have also enjoyed the paradox of the treatise on the Sublime being less used in the Romantic period, when the passions were at a premium, than in the early Augustan age, when they were at a discount, but when the reverence for all things Greek gave currency to what in itself would have been suspect. Thus Pope can with safety assume the accents of Longinus when praising the

passionate tone of Homer. We have also enjoyed Longinus's remarks on Sappho's ode to the effect of its reconciling contraries, with their anticipation of Coleridge's theory of the imagination. But in our supposed new history we shall find these matters less interesting than Longinus's conception of the place of literature in life. We shall read his wonderful last chapter on the venality and corruption of the world in which he lived along with the passages in which he indulges in a positive hero-worship of the great literary figures of the past; whence we shall easily see that for Longinus great literature was a substitute religion, much after the manner attributed by his enemies to Matthew Arnold. And literature as substitute religion is a topic today with a genuine emotional force.

The period in the history of criticism whose interest will most appreciate is the Middle Ages. So far its criticism has had no great interest to any but specialists. Lovers of Dante may read the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and his epistle to Can Grande; and a few non-specialists with an interest in the language of poetry may enjoy the first for its researches in the language proper to poetry and relate it to similar linguistic problems in western Europe. But the treatises on rhetoric, which form the bulk of so-called medieval criticism, are for the non-specialist dead. I don't say they need always be so, but I have not detected in the present educated reading public the powerful predisposition for matters of rhetorical technique required to bring the dead to life. On the other hand this reading public is more interested in the Middle Ages than it was a generation ago and would like to know what place literature really held in the life of the community. As far as I know this matter has never been thoroughly gone into; and its study would require much patience and tact. The evidence would be found, not in the treatises on rhetoric, but in casual remarks, scattered prefaces, implications, even silences. Patience would be required to accumulate the evidence, very great tact in drawing conclusions. The result would be highly complicated and contradictory but extremely interesting. I doubt if the Church had any consistent opinion on literature, but surmise that it treated it sometimes as a useful ally, and sometimes as a dangerous competitor after the manner so wonderfully expounded in Petrarch's *Secretum*. The Church was really at ease with literature when she could be certain it was a subsidiary activity to be allowed under that ticket of honest mirth which Aquinas had allowed to be necessary to the health of mankind. The Nun's Priest was on perfectly sure ground when he told his story of the cock and the fox. But the general conclusion would probably be found to support Compareschi when he said that 'while the ancients are steadily hated and maligned as pagans, their works are assiduously read and studied, and they are looked up to by the most enlightened Christians as men of learning

and genius'. However, I am not now concerned with the conclusions themselves but with my belief that, whatever these are, the present generation is likely to be interested both in them themselves and in the work leading up to them.

One of the critics who will figure most prominently in the new history of criticism is Sidney. I suppose what we have most valued him for is the sheer delight in poetry and confidence in its worth that shine through the whole of the *Defence of Poetry*; and nothing is likely to alter this. But beyond this the *Defence* has been thought of as 'a defence of romance rather than poetry' (Saintsbury), a useful summary of current Renaissance commonplaces, a means of introducing the latest Italianate critical ideas into England, and an interesting attempt to reconcile Plato and Aristotle. The new emphasis will be on Sidney's conspicuous success (unique in English critics of the Renaissance) in adjusting poetry to the other activities of life. Far from being a mere defence of romance, Sidney's notion that poetry goes beyond nature is securely linked to the living theology of the age. By excelling nature, by substituting a golden for a brazen world, poetry glimpses the paradise from which man fell and creates a world of which, though in actual life he cannot live up to it, he still has memories:

Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of Nature, but, rather give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to his own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when, with the force of a divine breath, he bringeth things forth far surpassing her doings; with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, sith our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it.

That is one cardinal belief in Sidney, but there is the complementary belief that poetry is also a species of action urging men towards that very perfection which it is miraculously able to reveal.

This purifying of wit, this enrichment of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is, to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of.

And because poetry is the highest form of teaching it is a prime agent of forwarding this process. In no critic is the connection



between a theory of poetry and a theory of life more triumphantly made than in Sidney.

My last example of how emphasis will be altered relates to Wordsworth. Here again the alteration should be to his benefit. Not that there can ever be any sense in making him out a greater critic than Coleridge. But hitherto criticism has centred mainly on those matters in which Coleridge was able to prove Wordsworth to be grievously wrong. This was largely Wordsworth's fault, for he did indeed, in his 1800 preface, give pride of place to those questions of rustic life, poetic diction and relation of verse and prose over which he incurred the just censure of Coleridge. Raleigh in a brilliant and persuasive chapter in his *Wordsworth* defended Wordsworth on the ground that he didn't quite mean what he said, that you could find a more plausible case by interpreting liberally and not pressing the letter of the text, and that Coleridge, though *technically* right, was *humanly* over-severe. Such a defence will count little compared with the change of emphasis which a new history of criticism is bound to make. Wordsworth on poetic diction is a critic improvising a defective defence of his own poetic innovations, a man finding the wrong reasons for the things which in his heart he knows to be right. He becomes a critic of universal validity when, dropping his special, personal theme, he seeks to answer the great general questions: What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And in his answers he gives us his theory of the place held by the poet in society. He lays down the complementary, if contrasted, functions of the scientist and the poet, linking the poet to some of the most living thought of the age:

The Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion . . . The Poet is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs; in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time.

That is passionately felt and spoken, and it is the very core of Wordsworth's great preface. The doctrine is that of revolutionary idealism; the brotherhood of man. Poetry is linked to society by being a supreme agent in promoting that brotherhood. To the present generation such a theory is far more exciting than the question of rustic life in poetry.

Such then is my case for a new history of criticism. Its writing

would be a very hard task. The old critical texts would have to be scanned with new eyes; and those eyes might become blurred and weary in the task. Moreover, if the composition lasted very long, there is the risk that the premises on which the book was being written would have changed before the end was reached. The mountain in labour would risk giving birth not to a silly little mouse but to a gigantic fossil.

## SAMUEL SMILES AND THE GOSPEL OF WORK

ASA BRIGGS

## I

'THE object of this book', wrote Samuel Smiles in his Second Preface to *Self-Help* in 1866, 'is to re-inculcate those old-fashioned but wholesome lessons — which perhaps cannot be too often urged — that youth must work in order to enjoy — that nothing creditable can be accomplished without application and diligence — that the student must not be daunted by difficulties, but conquer them by patience and perseverance, and that, above all, he must seek elevation of character without which capacity is worthless and worldly success is naught.'

It is good to know that the lessons were considered 'old-fashioned' in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is sometimes believed that the Victorians were the first to proclaim the 'gospel of work', or at least that they were the first to set it out systematically in texts and stories. William Hutton had already proclaimed it in eighteenth-century Birmingham, the new Poor Law of 1834 had consecrated it. William and Robert Chambers had popularized it,<sup>1</sup> and Thomas Carlyle had made it the corner-stone of his philosophy. Where Carlyle thundered, Samuel Smiles warned and pleaded. What Carlyle prophesied, Smiles turned into platitudes. And behind both the prophecies and the platitudes was what Smiles took as his deepest source, 'the Proverbs of Solomon'.

Smiles owed much to Carlyle's influence. He began *Thrift* with Carlyle's motto 'Not what I have, but what I do, is my kingdom'. He felt the splendour of all 'the quantity of done and forgotten work that lies silent under my feet in this world, and escorts and attends me, and supports and keeps me alive'.<sup>2</sup> Where Carlyle meditated on the Abbot Samson, Smiles told his stories of Josiah Wedgwood, William Lee, James Brindley and George Stephenson. And he told them to hungry listeners who were waiting for a message. The material for *Self-Help* was first presented to about a hundred young working men in Leeds, who entirely on their own initiative had set up an evening school for 'mutual improvement'. Smiles addressed them on more than one occasion, 'citing examples of what other men had done, as illustrations of what each might, in a greater or less degree, do for himself'. The lectures were so popular that

<sup>1</sup> For William and Robert Chambers see E. E. KELLETT in *Early Victorian England*, vol. II, pp. 43-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Past and Present*, book II, ch. 17.

Smiles sought a wider audience, and although in book-form they were turned down by Routledge in 1855, they were printed as *Self-Help* by John Murray four years later.

The book was an extraordinary success. Twenty thousand copies were sold in the first year; fifty-five thousand by the end of five years; and a hundred and fifty thousand by 1889. These sales far exceeded those of the great mid-nineteenth century novels. What was more remarkable, however, than the English reception of *Self-Help* was its popularity when translated into other languages. It appeared in Dutch and French, Danish and German, Italian and Japanese, Arabic and Turkish and several of 'the native languages of India'. As it went round the world, the gospel of work was spread just as efficiently and as fervently as any other of the great nineteenth century missionary enterprises. The seed rarely fell on stony ground, although it often took root in some peculiar places. 'The idea of the book was a novelty for the Italians', wrote the *Standard*, 'and the moral which it inculcates . . . eminently deserving of being enforced upon all classes of the public in Italy.' 'Le titre est à peu pres intraduisible', the *Revue des Deux Mondes* pointed out, '*Self-Help* (aide-toi toi-même). Une grande sagesse qu'on pourrait appeler la splendeur du bon sens, comme Platon définissait la splendeur du vrai, tel est le caractère qui distingue surtout *Self-Help*.' 'A Japanese translation of Mr. S. Smiles's *Self-Help* has been sent to us for inspection', wrote *The Times*. 'The English work forms an octavo of moderate size. In Japanese it has expanded into a book of 1500 or 2000 pages. It is not bound after the modern European fashion, but divided into eleven parts, each of which is neatly stitched with one silk thread. The paper . . . with the colour of raw silk or straw, is only printed on one side, and has not been pressed . . . On opening the book, we are at first reminded of an entomological collection.' It is perhaps further from Plato to Nakamura, the Japanese translator, than it is from Smiles's apparent entomology to his sociology, and Smiles must have been flattered not only by the fact that *Self-Help* had been printed on paper like silk but also by the translator's boast that 'almost all the higher classes of his Japanese countrymen now know what *Self-Help* is.' The fame of Smiles had travelled far since he first taught his oral lessons to the group of Leeds working men in a dingy room, which had been used as a temporary Cholera Hospital. Cholera itself could have travelled no faster.

## II

*Self-Help* was the first of four books, which taken together present a full picture of Smiles's social philosophy. *Character* (1871), *Thrift* (1875) and *Duty* (1887) are best studied as a whole, not merely because they follow the same method of organization and argument —

'anecdotal illustrations of life and character' — but because they develop a common theme. Indeed in his Preface to *Thrift*, Smiles wrote that it was intended as a sequel to *Self-Help* and *Character*. It might have appeared as an introduction to these volumes 'for Thrift is the basis of Self-Help, and the foundation of much that is excellent in character'.

Smiles took none of his ideals for granted. 'Prodigality is much more natural to men than thrift.' 'Economy is not a natural instinct, but the growth of experience, example and foresight.' *Self-Help* is more difficult than reliance on the goodwill of others or on convenient panaceas. 'Some call for Caesars, others for Nationalities, and others for Acts of Parliament.' 'Whatever is done *for* men and classes to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves . . . No laws, however stringent, can make the idle industrious, the thriftless provident, or the drunken sober. Such reforms can only be effected by means of individual action, economy and self-denial by better habits rather than by greater rights.'<sup>1</sup>

The 'better habits' were frequently sadly lacking. Smiles was no triumphant panegyrist of an Augustan Age. 'The deterioration of the standard of public men, of public morality, and of political principles, is undeniable.'<sup>2</sup> Scamped work, gambling, fraud, intemperance, dishonest advertisement, sharp practices dominated the industrial scene he portrayed. Smiles's catalogue of social virtues should be studied alongside his catalogue of social sins. His list of virtues did not spring from some peculiar sort of moral smugness. It reflected the needs of a society, where, despite the industrial achievements, there were still great areas of waste and inefficiency. 'We often hear that "Knowledge is Power",' he wrote, 'but we never hear that Ignorance is Power. And yet Ignorance has always had more power in the world than Knowledge. Ignorance dominates . . . because Knowledge, as yet, has obtained access only to the minds of the few.'<sup>3</sup> Better education would abate drunkenness, improvidence and crime, but it would not by itself be enough. Duty and Character would be needed to direct it towards general social improvement.

Smiles emphasized self-set standards as the props of society. 'National progress is the sum of individual industry, energy and uprightness, as national decay is of individual idleness, selfishness and vice. What we are accustomed to decry as great social evils will, for the most part, be found to be but the outgrowth of man's own perverted life.'<sup>4</sup> Social improvement could only come about by and through individuals. 'Men cannot be raised in masses, as

<sup>1</sup> *Self-Help*, ch. 1. Compare *Duty*, ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Thrift*, ch. IV.

<sup>4</sup> *Self-Help*, ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Duty*, ch. III.



the mountains in the early geological states of the world. They must be dealt with as units; for it is only by the elevation of individuals that the elevation of the masses can be effectively secured.<sup>1</sup>

This scepticism about political action did not imply that Smiles believed in *laissez-faire*. That would have been too simple an answer to give for a man who during his lifetime had seen some of the worst aspects of letting things be. It was physical disease rather than social waste which opened his eyes, as it opened the eyes of many of his contemporaries, to the shortcomings of a *laissez-faire* state. 'Before the age of railroads and sanitary reformers, the pastoral life of the Arcadians was a beautiful myth. The Blue Book men have exploded it for ever.'<sup>2</sup> The failure always to act on the advice of the 'Blue Book men' sprang from the powerful forces of inertia, which slacken effort and delay attention. 'When typhus or cholera breaks out, they tell us that Nobody is to blame. That terrible Nobody! How much he has to answer for. More mischief is done by Nobody than by all the world besides. Nobody adulterates our food. Nobody poisons us with bad drink . . . Nobody leaves towns undrained. Nobody fills gaols, penitentiaries and convict stations. Nobody makes poachers, thieves and drunkards. Nobody has a theory too — a dreadful theory. It is embodied in two words — *Laissez-faire* — Let alone. When people are poisoned by plaster of Paris mixed with flour, "Let alone" is the remedy . . . Let those who can find out when they are cheated: *Caveat emptor*. When people live in foul dwellings, let them alone. Let wretchedness do its work; do not interfere with death.'

The discovery of this malevolent and invisible Nobody revealed a figure of evil at the heart of the social world, where at the same time a benevolent and equally invisible hand was directing individual action to produce social gain. Smiles was never troubled about the possible identity of these two forces, and he always remained quite clear concerning their respective spheres of influence. They were hostile powers at perpetual war with each other. Fortunately in the struggle England was on the right side. 'The spirit of self-help, as exhibited in the energetic action of individuals, has in all times been a marked feature of the English character, and furnishes the true measure of our power as a nation.'<sup>3</sup> If Nobody could only be defeated within, anybody could be challenged without.

It is not without importance that Smiles, who extolled self-help and individual enterprise, could not resist the magic of organized

<sup>1</sup> *Duty*, ch. II.      <sup>2</sup> *Thrift*, ch. xv.

<sup>3</sup> *Self-Help*, ch. I. For some familiar strictures on Spain, see *Duty*, ch. v and *Thrift*, ch. I. 'Continuous effort or patient labour is for the Spaniard an insupportable thing. Half through indolence, half through pride, he cannot bend to work. A Spaniard will blush to work; he will not blush to beg!'

discipline, even military discipline. 'Wonderful is the magic of drill! Drill means discipline, training education . . . These soldiers — who are ready to march steadily against vollied fire, against belching cannon . . . or to beat their heads against bristling bayonets . . . were once tailors, shoemakers, mechanics, weavers and ploughmen; with mouths gaping, shoulders stooping, feet straggling, arms and hands like great fins hanging by their sides; but now their gait is firm and martial, their figures are erect, and they march along to the sound of music, with a tread that makes the earth shake.' And so room was found in the gallery of service for the soldier, and obedience, submission, discipline and courage were extolled. Smiles was not alone here too. He might have quoted Carlyle, but instead he quoted Ruskin: 'out of fiery and uncouth material, it is only soldiers' discipline which can bring the full force or power. Men who, under other circumstances, would have shrunk into lethargy or dissipation are redeemed into noble life by a service which at once summons and directs their energies'.<sup>1</sup> Smiles went further. 'One dare scarcely hint, in these days, at the necessity for compulsory conscription; and yet, were the people at large compelled to pass through the discipline of the army, the country would be stronger, the people would be soberer, and thrift would become much more habitual than it is at present.'<sup>2</sup>

### III

It was in his analysis of thrift that Smiles outlined the essentials of his theory of society. Individual savings provided the foundations of the national accumulation of capital, and the accumulation of capital was in itself a praiseworthy objective. 'Thrift produces capital; and capital is the conserved result of labour. The capitalist is merely a man who does not spend all that is earned by work.'<sup>3</sup> Smiles made no distinction between big and small capitalists, or between small savers and large investors. The working man could become a capitalist by adding prudence to industry. Marginal income<sup>4</sup> — the little bit wasted on gambling or drink — could guarantee individual security. 'A glass of beer a day is equal to forty-five shillings a year. This sum will insure a man's life for a hundred and thirty pounds payable at death. Or placed in a savings bank, it would amount to a hundred pounds in twenty years.'

Such savings would guarantee a man's independence. It was the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Duty*, ch. viii. 'The Soldier.' One of the chapter headings is Whyte-Melville's phrase: 'the highest of us is but a sentry at his post'.

<sup>2</sup> *Thrift*, ch. viii.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, ch. i.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, ch. ix. 'Little Things.' This chapter is a fascinating study of the marginal propensity to consume. Smiles discussed in detail seven possible ways of augmenting savings of one penny a day.

moral rather than the economic aspect of savings that Smiles stressed. The little capital a man has saved up 'is always a source of power. He is no longer the sport of time and fate. He can boldly look the world in the face . . . He can dictate his own terms. He can neither be bought nor sold. He can look forward with cheerfulness to an old age of comfort and happiness'.<sup>1</sup>

Savings were thus the fruit of individual responsibility, and provided insurance against the hazards of a working life and the cares of sickness and old age. It was the duty of the prudent individual to allow for such emergencies. In examining this problem in relation to the tribulations of boom and slump, Smiles diverged completely from twentieth century estimates of the importance of full employment. He had much to say of the effects of prosperous times on individual responsibility. "Prosperous times" are very often the least prosperous of all times. In prosperous times, mills are working full time; men, women and children are paid high wages; warehouses are emptied and filled . . . Everybody seems to be becoming richer and more prosperous. But we do not think whether men and women are becoming wiser, better trained, less self-indulgent, more religiously disposed . . . If this apparent prosperity be closely examined, it will be found that expenditure is increasing in all directions. There are demands for higher wages; and the higher wages, when obtained, are spent as soon as earned. Intemperance habits are formed, and once formed, the habit of intemperance continues . . . When a population is thoughtless and improvident, no kind of material prosperity will benefit them. Unless they exercise forethought and economy, they will alternately be in a state of "hunger or burst". When trade falls off, as it usually does after exceptional prosperity, they will not be comforted by the thought of what they *might* have saved, had it ever occurred to them that the "prosperous times" might not have proved permanent.'

Smiles showed little interest in the economic causes of waves of prosperity and depression, and accepted them with far less question than he accepted epidemics of disease.<sup>2</sup> He was concerned solely with their 'moral' effects, and it was part of his gospel of work that the easy gains of a period of prosperity were demoralizing, if they merely served to increase individual waste and improvidence. He did not blame the English workman for want of industry, but he accused him of want of foresight and prudence. He took his examples from a wide variety of sources. Chadwick's remarks on the Cotton Famine were quoted. 'Families trooped in to the relief rooms in the

<sup>1</sup> *Thrift*, ch. II.

<sup>2</sup> 'Trade has invariably its cycles of good and bad years, like the lean and fat kine in Pharaoh's dream — its bursts of prosperity followed by glut, panic and distress.' *Thrift*, ch. III.

most abject condition, whose previous aggregate wages exceeded the income of many curates.<sup>1</sup> Wage statistics were collected from Blackburn, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Sunderland. They are an interesting collection, less on account of their reliability, than because of the light they throw on the nature of current controversy. At Middlesbrough, rail rollers earned a rate of pay equal to that of Lieutenant-Colonels in the Foot Guards, plate rollers equal to that of Majors of Foot; and roughers equal to that of Lieutenants and Adjutants.<sup>2</sup> At Blackburn a perturbed employer complained that he could not afford lamb, salmon, young ducks and green peas until after his hands 'had been consuming these delicacies of the season for some three or four weeks'.<sup>3</sup> No doubt the diet of the same hands alternated in lean times with potatoes and porridge, but if they had only exercised a little more restraint, they might have been eating bacon and beans the whole year round.

Smiles did not connect thrift and avarice, even though he himself always tended to a certain austerity of consumption. He claimed that he hated the miser, the screw and the scrub. From the eight Keynesian motives for refraining from spending — Precaution, Foresight, Calculation, Improvement, Independence, Enterprise, Pride and Avarice—he drew out the first six and underlined them in gold, and rejected with scorn the last two. 'Thrift is not in any way connected with avarice, usury, greed or selfishness. It is in fact the very reverse of these disgusting dispositions.' If it were applied universally among the working classes, it would raise their whole social position. Smiles went back again to the dingy room in Leeds where he had addressed his first audience. 'Those who do society's work—who produce, under the direction of the most intelligent of their number, the wealth of the nation—are entitled to a much higher place than they have yet assumed. We believe in this "good time coming" for working men and women—when an atmosphere of intelligence shall pervade them—when they will prove themselves as enlightened, polite, and independent as the other classes of society.'<sup>4</sup>

It is important to stress that Smiles's main appeal was a direct one to the working classes through the media of the Sunday School prize and the guide book of the self-taught man. He praised the Co-operative movement, attacked employers who were opposed to the institution of savings banks on the grounds that the workmen might use their savings to finance strikes, and advocated a greater sympathy between classes. 'Want of sympathy pervades all classes—

<sup>1</sup> E. CHADWICK, *Address on Economy and Trade*.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from 'The Report of the Paris Universal Exhibition 1867, containing the Returns relative to the New Order of Reward'.

<sup>3</sup> *Thrift*, ch. iv.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

the poorer, the working, the middle and the upper classes. There are many social gaps between them, which cannot yet be crossed.<sup>1</sup> An increase in sympathy could not come about by charity — by 'giving money, blankets, coals and such-like, to the poor' — or by limiting competition.<sup>2</sup> It could only come about by increased independence coupled with increased benevolence. 'Thus only can the breath of society be sweetened and purified.' And only by hard work on both sides could real progress be achieved. In 'the necessity for exertion, we find the chief source of human advancement — the advancement of individuals as well as of nations'.

#### IV

It is useful to turn from economists like Mill to publicists like Smiles in order to understand the Victorian gospel of work. The economy functions within the framework of society, and the incentives to save and to work will be sharpened or blunted by habits and hopes, institutions and techniques. The Victorian writers and thinkers, glorifying self-help, reacted strongly against lingering mercantilist conceptions of the utility of luxury and the evil of thrift, the superiority of idleness and the inferiority of work. Smiles, who was too good a business man to omit from his illustrative anecdotes occasional spicy unmoral tales<sup>3</sup> produced out of his treasury of quotations the dusty but still tantalizing question asked Pantagruel by Panurge, 'What were you without your Debts?' and the ancient answer which corresponded to a lost society,<sup>4</sup> 'God preserve me from ever being without them! Do you think there is anything divine in lending or crediting others? No! To owe is the true heroic virtue'. Smiles found the answer an unsatisfactory one. For 'heroic virtue' he substituted the phrase 'the seedy side of debt'. 'A man has no business to live in a style which his income cannot support, or to mortgage his earnings of next week in order to live luxuriously today.' Nor has he any right to spend his time daydreaming when he might be working. 'The unhappy youth who committed suicide

<sup>1</sup> *Thrift*, ch. x, 'Masters and Men'.

<sup>2</sup> 'All life is a struggle. Amongst workmen, competition is a struggle to advance towards higher wages. Amongst masters, to make the highest profits . . . Stop competition, and you stop the struggle of individualism . . . Under competition, the lazy man is put under the necessity of exerting himself; and if he will not exert himself, he must fall behind. If he do not work, neither shall he eat . . . There is enough for all; but do your own share of work you must.' *ibid.*, ch. x.

<sup>3</sup> *Thrift*, ch. xiii. Such tales included those of Sheridan and Lamartine, both 'heroes of debt'. The latter 'ran through half a dozen fortunes', while boldly proclaiming 'that he hated arithmetic, that negative of every noble thought'.

<sup>4</sup> 'Lost' is an over-statement. In practice the lure of social ideals older than capitalism has led many nineteenth and twentieth century business men, and more frequently their sons and grandsons, if not to heroic debt, at least to relative idleness in the country. Business is still looked upon as *negotium*.



a few years since because he had been "born to be man and condemned to be a grocer" proved by the very act that his soul was not equal even to the dignity of grocery.<sup>1</sup> 'In human society, social rights necessitate their own observance. When the sense of responsibility is blunted, society goes to ruin.'<sup>2</sup>

Smiles stressed that the arguments he was using were not new ones. By the time that he died in 1904, the reaction against them was already well under way. In 1889, A. F. Mummery and J. A. Hobson's *Physiology of Industry* defied Victorian orthodoxy and argued that excessive saving was responsible for the under-employment of capital and labour in periods of bad trade. Orthodoxy was still powerful enough to refuse to allow Hobson to deliver political economy lectures for the London Extension Board on the grounds that his book was 'equivalent in rationality to an attempt to prove the flatness of the earth'.<sup>3</sup> The arguments seemed less silly after the economic system itself had toppled over the edge of world war and world depression. By that time the stage was set for books like R. H. Tawney's *The Acquisitive Society* (1921), which challenged the social presuppositions of nineteenth century society, and J. M. Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), which provided a new economic synthesis.

Since the time of Smiles, the social framework has changed almost beyond recognition. The assault on individualism, the belief that it is wicked and unbrotherly to outwork one's fellow workers, the state provision of insurance and social security, the new approach to savings, and the pressure and design of our current fiscal apparatus would all have shocked Smiles profoundly. If modern economists were to argue with him sufficiently persuasively, they might even shock him into accepting the outlines of the 'new economics'. But where would he find his anecdotes to illustrate it? And how would he be able to re-state the gospel of work for this generation? The dilemma is one that faces modern publicists as much as it would have faced Smiles, and so far there has been no satisfactory answer. It is precisely in its failure to fit the individual incentives to save and to work into the new social framework that the 'new economics' is weakest. It is true, although the austere Smiles living in an age when 'the average of employment was not intolerably low'<sup>4</sup> would never have thought of it, that individuals' attempts to save may lower their income and even their *realized* savings, but, to take the reverse situation, which Smiles and we know rather better, when the investment plans of governments and business men exceed what we want

<sup>1</sup> *Self-Help*, ch. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Duty*, ch. xv.

<sup>3</sup> See J. M. KEYNES, *General Theory*, pp. 358-71. Keynes quoted Hobson's address entitled 'Confessions of an Economic Heretic', delivered in 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 308.

to save at existing levels of income, then it may become necessary to tax individuals to such an extent that thrift becomes impossible and hard work a dubious economic proposition. Character too may quite easily falter in face of such a fierce assault, and only Duty, the last of Smiles's virtues, will be left.

It is still not clear what twentieth century balance of ideas and institutions will take the place of the mid-Victorian balance. So far there have been few signs of any balance at all. In a few concluding notes at the end of the *General Theory*, Keynes speculated on the social philosophy towards which his theory might lead.<sup>1</sup> The notes are brilliant but contradictory, shrewd but only doubtfully true. In one respect at least, largely as a result of recent experience, they can now be extended. Ideas, as Keynes always forecast, have already proved dangerous for good or evil.<sup>2</sup> The technical tools provided by him have proved indispensable to war-time planners and post-war socialists. So far, however, they have only mechanized one part of the process. Their essential complements have not been manufactured. No active incentives have been offered to the ranks of the planned, the men on whom, as always, the work of the nation depends. It may be the weakness of the Keynesian 'revolution' that while it teaches leaders, it fails in itself to inspire followers. If that should be the case, the social problem of the twentieth century will be far bigger and far more serious than the economic problem, and 'the gospel of work' in all its simplicity will have to be spread abroad by a band of new evangelists.

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, ch. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> The last sentence of the *General Theory* reads (p. 384): 'But, soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil.'

## BOOK REVIEWS

BERTRAND RUSSELL: *Human Knowledge, its Scope and Limits*. Allen & Unwin, 18s. net.

Lord Russell's secular godfather, John Stuart Mill, once remarked: 'The first question in regard to any man of speculation is, what is his theory of human life?' In the case of Russell himself, that question can be answered. His deep respect for astronomy and physics has led him to accord man a very small place indeed in the universe. But it has also led him to exalt man as the inquirer, the believer, the knower. It is Man the Knower who receives from our philosopher a steady, though sceptical, admiration. But Russell's latest book shows how narrowly he construes the word 'knowledge'. There is nothing in it about history, or ethics or religion; not even anything much about logic or mathematics. This might puzzle anyone unfamiliar with his earlier works. For Russell, any phenomenon that has been scheduled in somebody's ambitious programme, as explicable in physical terms, is as good as incorporated into physics. For this reason, 'knowledge' in this book very commonly means 'knowledge of the physical world', and Man the Knower becomes Man the Experimental Scientist. This, I think, will help us to answer Mill's 'first question' and to determine our attitude towards his whole philosophy. But even with these limitations, we have not reached the heart of the matter. Though there are many chapters devoted to other topics, both of philosophical and scientific interest, the heart of the matter is Russell's dissatisfaction with all previous discussions of empirical general knowledge, and of the part which induction is supposed to play in it. This has led him to a critical re-study of the theory of probability, and to a rejection of his own earlier, positivistic, account of the concept of *cause* in science. Some of the new views are to be found in his *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940), and in his recent *Physics and Experience*. Very likely they are familiar to those who have heard his Cambridge lectures and discussions: but to others this book contains (amongst so much else) the first full account of the new doctrine. It therefore has great interest for the scientist and the philosopher. The following paragraphs are an attempt to give the theory in outline.

The task of the scientist is not simply to find a general law which embraces all the existing evidence. That, of course, can always be done in a variety of ways. The scientist wants a law that shall be of use in making predictions: and it is natural to say (with Mill) that the choice of a promising hypothesis rests upon previous unanalysed experience—upon what Russell calls 'animal inference'. It is in virtue of such experience that what we observe sometimes seems to 'analyse itself', to have that 'alphabetical' character which, as Whewell pointed out, is a pre-requisite for the application of Mill's methods of induction. Russell agrees that experience plays a dual role in the establishment of scientific laws: expectations founded (in part) upon past experience, give a hypothesis its initial probability, and subsequent observations serve to confirm or refute it (p. 331). But Russell has now come to believe that these expectations do not rest entirely upon past experience. For, on analysis, they reveal definite beliefs about what *kind* of connection is likely to be a universal or causal one—beliefs that could not derive from any experience, although they are factual, not tautologous. Russell is convinced that we can make explicit certain general principles about the kinds of law that hold in nature.

Since Mill's day it has come to be believed that our general knowledge about matters of fact is never absolutely beyond the possibility of correction. This 'corrigibility' has, by many, been interpreted as a kind of probability which can be increased by the enumeration of favourable instances. Attempts have

accordingly been made, by Peirce, von Mises, Reichenbach and others, to elucidate the procedure of enumeration, or sampling, by reference to the mathematical theory of probability. It has been argued that, if the instances taken are sufficiently numerous, we can show deductively that the chance of a variation in later instances reduces to a very small fraction. In Part V of this book, Russell examines these arguments with some minuteness, and comes to the conclusion that they all fail in their main aim; which is really to *vindicate* induction under certain conditions that are mathematically determined. His conclusion depends upon the view that any arguments belonging to the realm of pure mathematics must fail to tell us anything about the truth or falsity of factual general propositions, unless we are in a position to supply some premises from outside mathematics. This conclusion is thoroughly well-supported by a discussion of the interpretation of mathematical and logical systems in physical terms (Part IV, Chapters I and II). So that Russell sides with those who insist upon a firm distinction between mathematical, or deductive, probability, and senses of probability applicable to empirical propositions. He takes the former to be a concept having no connection with truth or belief, and definable only by reference to the rules of the calculus of chances. Inductive probability, on the other hand, has an essential connection with statements which may be believed and which may be true or false. He holds that it rests ultimately upon the notion of 'intrinsic credibility'; i.e. the credibility which an empirical statement, whether general or not, has independently of all other statements.

This curious property of 'intrinsic credibility' will no doubt give rise to much discussion. It is not really confined to significant sentences, but applies to beliefs not expressed in language at all, and is continuous with the beliefs of animals. It is essentially connected with causation. In the case of a judgment of perception, for example, such as 'This is red', the immediate belief which I accord to my own statement is thought by Russell to derive from the close and relatively insulated causal connection between the stimulus upon me, and my verbal response. If I cannot actually be said to *perceive* this connection, at all events I at once recognize it as one likely to be a causal connection. But if I can immediately pick out the likely candidates for causality, as I am supposed to do in the case of this *particular* judgment, then *general* propositions of a factual character ought also to be recognizable as likely to be valid. And this is what Russell holds: general, as well as particular, statements may have intrinsic credibility. (Presumably some generalizations have *no* such credibility.)

This argument plainly presupposes that a causal relation is something other than mere regularity of sequence within experience. 'A is causally connected with B' may have significance (and credibility) even where B cannot be observed because it is remote, hidden, or has already been accomplished. Russell assures us that we never mean, by 'cause', invariable sequence whether within or outside experience. In a criticism of Hume's doctrine of 'impressions' which is reminiscent of Whitehead, he argues that cause must mean some inner connection (473). This relation cannot be established by induction (331): the task of induction is to test the relative probability of different hypotheses, each of which has an assessable intrinsic credibility.

It was, of course, Hume's view that a causal connection could not in fact *be* anything but invariable sequence: it was Russell who, in 1912, assured us that scientists had given up *supposing* that it was anything more.

A statement has intrinsic credibility in so far as it satisfies certain *a priori* expectations. Russell attempts to formulate the content of these expectations in a set of 'Postulates of Scientific Inference' (Part VI). The first is a principle of quasi-permanence: an event of a given kind is usually preceded or followed by an event of a very similar kind. The second asserts the existence of relatively independent causal lines: A can commonly act on B without the action being

masked or modified by the action of C, D, E, etc. Hence we can commonly calculate a resultant of A and B without taking into account the rest of the universe. The third principle denies action at a distance. The fourth is a structural postulate: where many events are grouped, in physical space-time, about a centre, a cause can usually be found, having a corresponding structure to that of the group of events. It should be noted that Russell seems to assume that what we can infer about a cause or an effect is normally a similarity of structure (not of 'quality') arising from a parallelism of causal lines. But his last postulate, that of analogy, seems to allow an inference to similarity of quality. For example, the argument that your experiences must be qualitatively similar to mine, not merely that the structure of the physiological causes of your sensations must be similar to the structure of mine. Russell also seems inclined to accept an argument by analogy to show that, if I perceive a body as brown and hard, the body continues to be hard after I have ceased to touch it (513).

These postulates (as Russell states with emphasis) are genuine factual general propositions. In what sense, then, can we be said to know them? Russell offers various considerations in their favour, but it need hardly be said that he does not regard them as true only of 'the world of phenomena' and not known to be true of a 'world of noumena'. We know our postulates to be true of the one real world. In his attitude towards his postulates, Russell seems to be taking up very much the same position as Whitehead in his *Process and Reality*.

One argument of Russell's is that if physics is true then these postulates must be true, and of course we all know that physics is (in general) true. Another, is that unless we accept these principles we are confined to a solipsism of the present moment, which is all but a denial of knowledge. A third argument is found in Part VI, Chapter I. The expectations, from which these postulates are derived, are animal inferences, and can best be understood by comparison with inference in the other animals. In this book we are assuming the substantial truth of the sciences, and it is therefore not improper to make use of scientific knowledge about the behaviour of animals. Biologists assure us that animals secure an adaptation to their environment which is, on the whole, suited to the general conditions of their lives. And can we say less of the animal inferences of human beings? I do not think this last argument will give much comfort.

Russell is not easily reconciled to the *a priori*, as we can see from his doctrine of substance in Part IV. He there attempts to show that a particular thing can always be defined in terms of the compresence of qualities and relations. The basic particular things are events, and it follows from the definition of 'particular', that it is only a contingent fact that events do not *precede themselves*. The uniqueness of each event in space-time is an accidental property. This unusual result is regarded as a matter of congratulation, since it enables us to avoid the claim that we have *a priori* knowledge about particulars (or, an *a priori* doctrine of substance) (315). The reader may be puzzled to know why such pains should be taken to avoid the *a priori* here, when it has to be accepted so fully in the doctrine of cause.

The question naturally leads us to Russell's account of general propositions, and what it means to believe them. I think his view makes general beliefs much more like beliefs in particular matters of fact, than most philosophers have supposed — not, as Russell himself suggests, *less* like. For he allows that we can infer general negative propositions from a single perception, without the help of any general premise. This happens (according to Russell) when I see that it is not raining. But this does not extend to affirmative general beliefs about an unlimited class. For these, we must rely on inductive inference based on intrinsic credibilities. But, as I have already implied, Russell draws no sharp distinction here between the particular and the general. Even the immediate judgment of perception has only a *degree* of credibility in itself: it has also a derived credi-



bility, which depends upon its relationships to other propositions. So that even a judgment of perception may be, or may become, doubtful, on account of its derived credibility — or incredibility. We cannot regard them, therefore, as data upon which an altogether different, and inherently 'corrigible', kind of belief, can be founded. For both the 'data' and the generalization are seen to be inherently 'corrigible' and inherently credible (to some degree). Here, then, is Bertrand Russell saying that a general statement may have a degree of credibility which is not derived from experience of instances.

This doctrine goes very far towards annihilating that distinction between general knowledge and knowledge of particulars which has hitherto been regarded as fundamental in empirical theories of knowledge and in the formal logic that has developed along with them. The notion that our empirical knowledge arises by inference from something that we really know (by perception), seems to be undermined. Russell says in this book that he still accepts the notion of an epistemic order, but admits that the mutual relevance of general and singular propositions may be so complicated that there is 'a certain approximation to the theory of Hegel and Dewey' (413). That is, to the Coherence Theory of Truth.

There is, of course, immense interest in seeing Russell's metaphysics turn to more traditional lines, and in examining his reasons for these changes. The book also discusses many other topics of interest to the scientist and philosopher. But something should be said of the claim that it is a book for the general reader.

It might seem that Russell has enlarged a new and important account of causation into an omnibus volume, by writing a short survey of scientific knowledge and pretensions (Part I), and adding a condensed summary of his *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (Part II and chapters of later parts). The final result is very imperfect as a whole. There is a great deal of unnecessary repetition (including repetition of the wise-cracks); the writing is often slipshod and the argument very bewildering. The key-words do not (as the author rashly promises they will) become clearer as the book proceeds. (For example, the misleading use of 'know' in the chapter on 'Egocentric Particulars' is nowhere explicitly corrected.) So that any 'general reader' who wishes to see the significance of the main arguments would be well advised to prepare himself by reading what he can understand of Russell's earlier works.

The criticisms made in the last paragraph apply chiefly to those chapters in which little more is attempted than a summary of previous books: but they also apply, in varying degrees, to the whole book. But a writer in *The Cambridge Journal* must not be expected 'to lay hands on his father Parmenides' for such defects as these. Russell's books (and Moore's comments on Russell's books) have shaped Cambridge philosophical thinking for very many years, and it is evident from this book that his influence will continue, perhaps along new lines. A French lady who had married an Englishman apologized to her French friends for his prolonged silences. 'You know', she said, 'he is an Englishman and he has to think about Bacon and Locke.' In a similar way, Cambridge philosophers are obliged to think about Russell's philosophy: but not, evidently, in silence.

KARL BRITTON

H. MAYNARD SMITH: *Henry VIII and the Reformation*. Macmillan, 30s. net.

In the preface to his former study of *Pre-Reformation England*, Dr Maynard Smith expressed his hope 'to write another volume covering the period from the divorce of Henry VIII to the death of Elizabeth'. The present sequel which deals with the reign of Henry VIII is a partial fulfilment of the author's promise; and unfortunately must remain uncompleted, for the death of Dr Maynard Smith shortly after its publication, deprives his readers of the hope of the full-scale survey of the English reformation which he had planned. The frustration

of his ambition is tacitly admitted in this volume; for to the 450 pages devoted to Henry VIII there is appended a chapter of 9 pages summarizing the author's general conclusions concerning the rest of the Tudor period and its effects on the contemporary Church of England.

It goes without saying that Dr Maynard Smith's book is eminently readable, strewn liberally with wise saws and modern instances, and with the writer's opinions, as divine and casuist no less than as student of history, on the several individual figures portrayed on his ample canvas. To the making of this volume there has gone much reading; for though there is no claim to have consulted manuscript sources, evidence occurs in every chapter of the width and thoroughness of consultation of printed sources. Of the two parts into which it is divided, the Political Reformation, and the Religious Reformation, the second is the more interesting and useful. It is to be regretted that in the former section Dr Maynard Smith iterated so much of the political and diplomatic events of the reign, to which abundant attention had already been given by Pollard, Constant and other writers. Here little remains to be said which has not been said before; and the time and space occupied by this part would have been better spent (from the standpoint of one reader at least) in writing of the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth. It will suffice to say that in this political history, the reader will find a spirited, interesting and informative account of the labyrinthine twists of political and diplomatic events to serve as background for the real theme of the book.

In his account of the religious reformation Dr Maynard Smith comes to grips with his principal subject. Here perhaps the most arresting feature of his book is the series of character-sketches of the leading figures. All are interesting; and some worthy to be remembered and pondered; especially those of Henry VIII himself and Cranmer. The author also has the welcome gift of bringing out the main characteristics of difficult topics, as shown by his lucid comments on Tyndale's New Testament on page 293. Nor does he ever show reluctance to differ in opinion from previous historians, or to break a lance with apologists, alike Catholic and Protestant. He is convinced that Henry VIII had no far-sighted scheme in mind when he began his threats to the papacy. 'He had no long-term policy, and was perhaps all the more successful because he started without any idea of how far he was going. His permanent achievements were for the most part due to afterthoughts. He had a particular object and attained it; the object had then to be justified by postulating a general principle, and when the general principle was applied, unforeseen results ensued.' But how does this maxim apply to the problem of the relationship of the royal supremacy to parliament? 'His supremacy was personal and pertained to himself alone. His daughter Elizabeth was equally clear that she did not share her ecclesiastical authority with parliament, but the parliaments which passed Acts of Uniformity might claim, and did claim, a control over the church.' There lies the rub; for whatever the political theorists and the ecclesiastical lawyers may deduce concerning the royal supremacy from the famous preamble to the Act of Appeals, the fact remains that the co-operation of crown and parliament in each stage of the Henrician reformation set precedents which could not afterwards be put aside in the interests of a personal supremacy of the sovereign over the church, to be exercised without the intermeddling of parliament. The battle was lost in principle before its opening skirmishes had begun.

In dealing with the various theological standards of doctrine set forth during the reign of Henry VIII, Dr Maynard Smith treads a cautious *via media* between interpreters who see in them no deviation from the traditional faith and those who scan them for evidences of incipient protestantism. It is something of an anti-climax therefore to read his concluding sentence about the doctrinal tendencies of the king: 'Speculation about his real intentions would be foolish; but we may be more or less certain that he would not have been altogether satisfied

with the prayer book of 1552.' This surely is a masterpiece of understatement if not of anti-climax. And here, though it may seem ungrateful when so much good fare has been provided, the reader must recur to the regret that Dr Maynard Smith did not curtail radically the first part of his book, in order to leave time for his intended survey of Edward VI and Elizabeth. For Henry VIII cannot be regarded as the architect of the doctrinal and liturgical standards of the reformed Church of England; and for the understanding of these, this book provides no clue. Unfortunately the author became so interested in the detail of his omnivorous reading as to fail to keep his eye on the distant goal. Perhaps the days are unsuited for a second history of the English reformation on the scale of R. W. Dixon; perhaps such a task is too great for any individual to accomplish. Dr Maynard Smith has offered us the first two acts of an unfinished drama; and we are left, vainly asking for more.

NORMAN SYKES

J. H. PARRY: *The Audiencia of New Galicia in the Sixteenth Century: A Study in Spanish Colonial Government.* Cambridge University Press, 12s. 6d. net.

Whatever the view of those whose knowledge of the Spanish Empire derives from Kingsley's *Westward-ho*, historians have long since ceased to flog the dead horse of the *leyenda negra*, the black legend of the Spain of Charles V and Philip II. Violent controversy has given way to detailed and impartial study, and the *gesta* of imperial Spain are now coming to be judged not as either black or white, but as the first attempt since Rome to build an empire outside the feudal relationship. In this attempt Spain had no previous experience to draw upon, and in the face of the most formidable odds the degree of her success was remarkable. The government in Madrid, and the majority of its viceroys overseas, never lost their fundamental sense of responsibility towards those they governed, and they crystallized this attitude in the *Recopilación de Leyes de Indias*, the collection of statute law referring to Spain's American colonies. But theory and practice often showed wide divergence. Spanish administrators had to hold the balance between contradictory claims: of the Indians for protection against exploitation and enslavement, of the Spanish settlers for indispensable Indian labour, and of the royal court's insatiable appetite for American treasure. It is not surprising that the lawyers of the Council of the Indies in Seville, or the *conquistadores* in Mexico, were often incapable of achieving this feat, and that despite all royal regulations the Indians were exploited and often maltreated. The testimony of six Indians was taken as equivalent to that of one Spaniard (p. 159), and this value relation was perhaps the best an Indian could hope for. Yet there were always Spaniards who would defend the Indians' rights at whatever personal cost to themselves, men like the courageous Lebrón de Quiñones who suffered calumny and persecution for his activities, or the saintly Bishop Mendiola whose tomb became a place of pilgrimage for the Indians.

Mr Parry's new book is a close analysis both of the problems facing the Spaniards and of their attempts to solve them in the administration of the part of Mexico they called New Galicia. Since the province was too far removed from the capital to allow of direct control by the viceroy, the work of government devolved upon the local Spanish courts, the audiencias. The system had grave defects. 'The audiencias of the Indies were not designed, either by their composition or by the nature of their authority, to inspire and originate. They were courts of professional judges called upon to administer, not administrative boards called upon to adjudicate' (p. 194). In contrast to British India and to most modern colonial empires, however, New Galicia had far too many administrators, and their jurisdictional quarrels occupied much of their energy — a typical feature of Spanish government.

Mr Parry has written a scholarly work and one which will be of great value to students of the history of colonial empires. Yet it is not an easy book to read, and even professional historians may find that the author has over-estimated their familiarity with his subject when he writes (p. 57): 'The tribes of Michoacán and Chimalhuacán were of course completely independent.'

H. G. KOENIGSBERGER

MARGARET DIGBY: *The World Co-operative Movement*. *Hutchinson's University Library*, 7s. 6d. net.

The co-operative movement with its world-wide ramifications is so little known and understood in this country that Margaret Digby's book has a very special value and importance. As secretary of the Horace Plunkett Foundation she is naturally interested in the agricultural side of the movement and devotes six of her chapters to it, but the urban aspect, the banking and insurance businesses and the large retail societies of the cities are all adequately described. It has been said of the co-operative movement that it has its feet on the ground and its head in the stars, and the author makes the same point when she says of it that it 'sprang from two sources, the practical expedient and the dream'. Nothing could be more mundane than the buying and selling over the grocery counter which is what co-operation chiefly means to millions of people, while the dream of a community in which co-operation would take the place of competition has always had a place in the mind of mankind.

The growth of co-operation in this country has been completely unplanned. Nothing could have been humbler than its birth in 1844, but in that small beginning was contained the all-important device whereby the trading surplus was distributed to members in proportion to their purchases. On this principle have been built up the thousand societies and nine and a half million members in the retail societies of today. Each further development has come as the demand for it arose — the Wholesale, the Co-operative Party, the Women's Guild, the Co-operative Press. Perhaps the most spectacular have been the bank with its £90,000,000 credit balances and the Insurance Society which has risen since 1913 to the third place among the industrial assurance companies.

An immense amount of information is forthcoming in these pages about the many different forms which co-operation has taken in different countries. Belgium has led the way in social and educational activity; Sweden has shown boldness and imagination in its pushing of production and in the style and charm of its shops and goods. The U.S.S.R. has developed the co-operative store in its rural areas where it is often the sole purveyor of consumption goods. Here also much light industry is in the hands of the workers' artels and 'it is largely through their efforts that the peasant arts of Russia — embroidery, rug-making, wood-carving and toy-making — have been carried on and adapted to modern uses'.

An interesting development in Germany was the Co-operative Credit Bank which made loans to farmers for seed or stock and was so successful that many villages were transformed by the improved condition of the members. This movement has been the model for credit banks in many other countries, including India. Also in Germany were started the People's Banks for urban workers in industry and this too spread rapidly into other countries. By this means the small industrialist is able to obtain loans for tools or stock-in-trade. It is strange that this idea of Credit Banks has never taken hold in this country. There are many facilities here for thrift in the Post Office Savings Bank, in National Savings or in Co-operative Societies but none of these agencies make the loans which have been found such a desirable method of mutual assistance in other countries.

The author points out in the conclusion of her book some of the problems that face the co-operative movement here in Great Britain. What is the sphere of

co-operation in the face of increasing nationalization? This question remains unanswered and should be the occasion of much hard thinking. Marketing Boards, Import controls and rationing — all part of a planned economy — have vitally affected the movement. Co-operation cannot stand still. It must strike out into yet wider fields or it may find itself restricted to a limited sphere which the State either cannot or does not choose to occupy.

C. D. RACKHAM

THEODOR HAECKER: *Kierkegaard the Cripple*. Harvill Press, 5s. net.

It has always been admitted that the 'thorn in the flesh' played an important part in Kierkegaard's spiritual biography, but there has been a lot of argument about what this affliction was and how great an influence it exerted on his thought. In 1942 the Danish writer Rikard Magnussen produced two books in which he brought forward evidence to show that Kierkegaard was a hunchback, and discussed the general significance of this fact. The appearance of these two volumes led Haecker to write this short essay — the last but one of his written works — in which the general problem of the inter-relation of mind and body is examined with special reference to the concrete case of Kierkegaard himself. It is a brilliant and sensitive piece of writing, critical but sympathetic, an important contribution to the study of the man who has been called 'the greatest Dane of all time'. It should be read by all who have felt the power of Kierkegaard's pen, and especially by those whom he has violently repelled or as violently attracted. It is as mistaken to dismiss him as a pathological pervert as it is to glorify him with uncritical paradoxologies.

Haecker admits that, in principle, Kierkegaard's physical deformity may have been sufficient to upset the balance of his thought. He distinguishes between the metaphysical — to which, as to the logical and the mathematical, 'external' considerations are irrelevant — and the existential — to which they are highly relevant. Metaphysics is a science of being; existential thought is concerned with the problems of human existence. Kierkegaard's writing is existential rather than metaphysical. We cannot, then, escape consideration of his physical deformity.

Haecker argues that, in the main, this deformity did not blind Kierkegaard to the light of Christian truth, although his triumph over it was never complete, and demonic tendencies, natural to a cripple, were given spasmodic expression. He maintains that Kierkegaard's pessimism is very different from, say, the pessimism of a Schopenhauer — and Schopenhauer, hale and hearty, enjoyed all the ordinary pleasures of a *bon vivant* — it is a pessimistic despair of the 'world', and such despair has always been a part of the main Christian tradition. Nor, in point of fact, is pessimism and despair the only note in Kierkegaard's psychology. His Christian faith brings him through and beyond despair; and Haecker quite rightly emphasizes (as did Magnussen) the importance of the triumphant cry of joy which is to be found in Kierkegaard's Journal for 1838, May 19th, 'at 10.30 in the morning'. 'It was a moment in ordinary, measurable time . . . an intimate contact with the eternal . . . a "taste of God" which admits of no future personal doubt.' On the other hand, there are occasions when Kierkegaard voices thoughts for which no room can be found in the Christian framework, and here Haecker is willing to admit the evil influence of the deformity.

He discusses at some length three *crucies* of Kierkegaard's behaviour: his cancellation of his engagement to Regine, his fight with *The Corsair*, and his attack upon the Danish State Church in *The Moment*. In the first two episodes, Haecker admits, Kierkegaard's deformity exercised a sinister influence; although, he thinks, it was his innate melancholy as well as his deformity which decided him to break with Regine. But in the last episode Haecker insists that the determining factor was spiritual and not physical. Kierkegaard believed that he



was destined to be an 'extraordinary missionary', but 'his conception was unfortunately so subjective that it can neither be recognized nor acknowledged by the Church or the Christian conscience'. In his zeal for the How he lost sight of the What. He made an absolute of human honesty, and forgot the richness and abundance of Christian being. 'Impure passions also played their part ... fired by the deformed body that was the thorn in his flesh and smouldering for a long time, [they] were to flare up suddenly into a colossal contempt for everyone.'

The successes of Kierkegaard's utterance can be partly ascribed to the fact that he thought of his work as 'corrective' rather than 'systematic'. Haecker believes, however, that much more is to be explained by 'the predominance of the ethical over the metaphysical'. In Kierkegaard's case 'the accent was on the ethical' — rather than on the aesthetic or the religious, to use his own categories. But, after all, how much does this explain?

True, the accent was on the ethical. Surely, however, the ethic was fundamentally religious, and even the preoccupation with human honesty was determined by the conviction that only the pure in heart shall see God. Again, though a more metaphysical turn of mind might have saved Kierkegaard from such absurdities as his category of the Absurd, would it have saved him from his excesses in attacking the Danish Church? Apart from all question whether it is possible to have a science of being such as Haecker, in line with St Thomas, has in mind, would metaphysics have helped him to decide whether or not he had a God-given mission to arraign the established Church; and, if he had, on what score he should arraign it? And if his attack on the Church degenerated into an expression of universal contempt, was this not a sign of moral rather than of metaphysical short-coming?

Whatever answers we give to these difficult questions, Haecker's essay reveals a rare insight into the spirit and thought of Kierkegaard, not to mention several pages of good sense on the proper function of paradox in Christian thinking. There are, too, ten plates of drawings and caricatures of Kierkegaard, some of which have not appeared in this country before.

PETER BAELEZ

MARJORIE GRENE: *Dreadful Freedom, A Critique of Existentialism*. University of Chicago Press: Cambridge University Press, 15s. net.

The author of this competent and sympathetic study of Existentialism is not only a philosopher by profession but has herself studied under Heidegger and Jaspers. She describes her work as an introductory essay and warns the reader that he will find no detailed treatment of either Phenomenology or existentialist theories of time. It would be unjust to reproach her on this score, but these voluntary omissions may account for certain important gaps in her exposition.

In general, its limits are indicated by the title. Mrs Grene has concentrated mainly on expounding the concepts of freedom and dread in Heidegger and Sartre. This is already apparent in her excellent introductory chapter where she contrasts Existentialism with Pragmatism. She shows the difference to reside in their conception of the relation of fact to value. Pragmatism is a positivism affirming that human values emerge spontaneously from fact; Existentialism stresses the dichotomy of fact and value, the latter originating in the free act of the individual who chooses his values and so brings meaning into the world of brute fact.

The preliminary chapter on Kierkegaard traces the passage from 'outwardness' to 'inwardness'. In keeping with her theme, Mrs Grene emphasizes the more apocalyptic elements in Kierkegaard and omits all reference to 'repetition'. The result is to narrow somewhat his concept of dread. Dread is the 'possibility of freedom' in the sense that, once it has enabled the self to grasp his paradoxical relation to God, life becomes a God-directed movement by an exercise of pur-

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positive freedom within a meaningful temporal framework. On this plane, the absurdity and contingency of existence, even in the 'fear and trembling' involved in the self's dependence on grace, are now fully significant categories which do not preclude the 'hope' inseparable from a resolutely assumed and God-guaranteed destiny.

On Heidegger and Sartre, the core of her book, Mrs Grene is admirable. She does not overlook their religious relevance. Indeed, Sartre's position is Kantian rather than atheistic, the idea of God, however logically impossible, being shown to constitute the regulating principle of action. Incidentally, the demonstration of this logical impossibility is dependent on Sartre's preliminary definitions of the two types of being — things and consciousness — in terms of not-being as an ontological principle. The omission of any treatment of his conception of negation and, particularly, the refusal to consider his philosophy in its claim to be an ontology are therefore surprising.

The author is at her best when demonstrating the incompatibility between Sartre's political philosophy with its ideal of solidarity, and his account of the self's relation to others in terms of conflict. She further shows that, by positing revolutionary action as an end rather than as a means, he is logically bound to envisage a limit where the free man in a free society is in revolt against freedom; a sufficient proof that liberty as such is not 'an adequate replacement for more substantive conceptions of value'.

The chapter on 'the new revelation' — Jaspers and Marcel — is inadequate. In particular, the dismissal of Marcel as a mere sentimentalist is unjust. He, like Sartre (*pace* Mrs Grene), starts from the *cogito*. The essay *Moi et Autrui* (in *Homo Viator*: she shows no signs of having read it or the later works) is a rigorous analysis of the initial intersubjectivity conducted with a dialectical skill that yields nothing to Sartre. Moreover, it establishes the view she herself puts forward when criticizing Sartre's *cogito* — that consciousness evolves from 'organic relationships' and from a primal 'togetherness of the family'. Marcel's contribution to the problem of values is not recognized. This is a curious omission because the main conclusion to Mrs Grene's work — namely, that freedom is not the sole good, it itself implying a realm of values in which we 'find' our goods, and that values are not created by acts but implicit therein — is the central theme of Marcel's philosophy.

Nevertheless, however he may dissent on particular points, the reader of Mrs Grene's book will find the issues put squarely before him in an altogether lucid and stimulating manner.

IAN W. ALEXANDER

ANDRÉ SIEGFRIED: *Canada: An International Power*, New and Revised Edition, 1949. Cape, 12s. 6d. net.

This book, a reissue with some modification of an old book, is not a serious contribution to political or economic knowledge. It is friendly enough to Canada, but it exaggerates greatly the friction between French Quebec and the rest of Canada, and the danger to Canada of absorption by the U.S.A. The international boundary between Canada and U.S.A. is no more artificial than that between France and Belgium, and I have never heard of Belgium being worried by the danger of absorption into France.

Americans increasingly behave with respect and indeed generosity to Canada. They do not dominate Canadian business, they do not estrange British Canadians from the Old Country. M Siegfried tilts at windmills. Canada is not 'inherently' American. It is inherently Canadian. Its east-west axis is determined by past history and present advantages and there will be no threat to it, if it is supplemented by a north-south axis, in regard to pulp and paper, minerals, etc. Canada

has an adequate population. If she increased faster than she is doing, it would be to her detriment.

The possession of Alaska by the U.S. is an enormous advantage to Canada, as it secures her against danger from Asia. M Siegfried has something of interest to say, but his book suffers greatly from the fact that you cannot by re-hashing the thoughts of thirty years ago contribute anything greatly worth while on an economy so dynamic as that of Canada.

C. R. FAY

MAURICE JAMES CRAIG: *The Volunteer Earl*. Cresset Press, 18s. net.

The somewhat unfamiliar subject of this biography is James Caulfeild, fourth Viscount and first Earl of Charlemont, whose dates are 1728-99. He played no very eminent part in British history, although he took a certain part in the movement for Irish independence in the great days of Henry Grattan and he became General-in-Chief of the Irish Volunteers of 1782. As a young man he travelled widely in Turkey and Greece and left a manuscript journal of his travels, the greater part of which is published here for the first time, and makes both colourful and entertaining reading. It reveals a man of keen and scholarly mind, no better in his amorous morality than most other leisured aristocrats of the mid-eighteenth century, yet certainly no idle rake. He became one of the best scholars of the Irish peerage (a higher tribute than might appear at first sight) and one of its most cultivated and assiduous builders. His greatest legacy to the architecture of modern Ireland is Sir William Chambers's little masterpiece, the Casino at Clontarf, which cost him some sixty thousand pounds at a time when his annual

## BASIL

# SOVIET STUDIES

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This new Journal will begin publication in June 1949. It is edited, on behalf of the Department for the Study of the Social and Economic Institutions of the U.S.S.R., University of Glasgow, by J. MILLER, M.A., and R. J. A. SCHLESINGER, DR.RR.POL., PH.D.

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# BLACKWELL

income was less than eight thousand. It was fortunately taken over in 1930 as an Irish national monument.

Mr Craig remarks of him, in connection with his considerable Irish estates in Armagh and Tyrone, that 'he was not a model landlord', and that 'though he never lived on them, they were not entirely neglected'. He spent almost as much time in London as in Dublin, but in later life his London interests in the Society of Dilettanti gave way to political interests in Dublin, as the patriotic movement caught him up in its complicated toils. His biographer calls him, as a politician, 'the most single-minded of the patriots in this sense: that he saw the events of his time as a pageant of patrician and republican virtue'. Perhaps he was too pure in his patriotism to be effective, just as he was too lavish in his building-expenditure to be quite solvent: but he remains no less attractive and sympathetic a figure for that.

Mr Craig writes with scholarly devotion and painstaking accuracy, and with subtle delineation of character. It is in many ways a triumph of biographical art to devote so much loving care to the life-story of a man and yet remain so objectively detached and discriminating in judgment of him. He writes in a restrained yet vivid style which is very engaging. Above all — and this makes the book of more general interest and value to the social historian — he uses the theme of Caulfeild's life as the frame for a skilful picture of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy both in its hey-day and in its decline. He died, appropriately enough, the year before Pitt's Act of Union became law.

DAVID THOMSON

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

*The inclusion of any book in this list does not preclude its review in a later issue*

SAMUEL H. BEER: *The City of Reason*. Harvard University Press: Oxford University Press, 22s. net.

ANGELO PHILIP BERTOCCHI: *Charles Du Bos and English Literature, A Critic and his Orientation*. King's Crown Press: Oxford University Press, 20s. net.

ALAN BULLOCK and A. J. P. TAYLOR: *A Select List of Books on European History 1815-1914*, Edited for the Oxford Recent History Group. Oxford University Press, 5s. net.

H. E. BUTLER: *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond concerning the acts of Samson Abbot of the Monastery of St. Edmund*, Translated from the Latin with Introduction, Notes and Appendices. Nelson, 15s. net.

J. R. M. BUTLER: *The Present Need for History*, An Inaugural Lecture delivered on January 26th, 1949. Cambridge University Press, 1s. 6d. net.

STEPHEN CLISSOLD: *Whirlwind*, An Account of Marshal Tito's Rise to Power. Cresset Press, 15s. net.

LUIS DIEZ DEL CORRAL: *El Liberalismo Doctrinario*. Instituto de Estudios Políticos Madrid, 75 pesetas.

W. H. GARDNER: *Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*, Volume II. Secker and Warburg, 30s. net.

SEBASTIAN DE GRAZIA: *The Political Community, A Study of Anomie*. University of Chicago Press: Cambridge University Press, 22s. 6d. net.

ELIE HALÉVY: *England in 1815, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, Volume I. Benn, 18s. net.

J. HUIZINGA: *Homo Ludens, A Study in the Play Element in Culture*. Routledge, 18s. net.



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- BERTRAND DE JOUVENEL: *Problems of Socialist England*, Translated by J. F. Huntington. *Batchworth Press*, 12s. 6d. net.
- J. M. KEYNES: *Two Memoirs*, Dr. Melchior: *A Defeated Enemy*, and *My Early Beliefs*, Introduced by David Garnett. *Hart-Davis*, 7s. 6d. net.
- FRANK MUMBY: *Publishing and Bookselling, A History from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. *Cape*, 25s. net.
- ALLARDYCE NICOLL (Ed.): *Shakespeare Survey, An Annual of Shakespearian Study and Production*, No. 2. *Cambridge University Press*, 12s. 6d. net.
- DANIEL O'CONNELL: *Nine Centenary Essays*, edited by Professor Michael Tierney. *Browne and Nolan*, 15s. net.
- ANDRE ROCH: *Climbs of My Youth*. *Lindsay Drummond*, 12s. 6d. net.
- JOHN RUSKIN: *Praeterita, Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts*. Perhaps Worthy of Memory in my Past Life, with an Introduction by Kenneth Clark. *Hart-Davis*, 15s. net.
- VISCOUNT SAMUEL: *Creative Man and other Addresses*. *Cresset Press*, 9s. 6d. net.
- G. L. S. SHACKLE: *Expectation in Economics*. *Cambridge University Press*, 10s. 6d. net.
- C. F. STRONG: *Modern Political Constitutions, an Introduction to the Comparative Study of their History and Existing Form*, Third (Revised and enlarged) Edition. *Sidgwick and Jackson*, 25s. net.
- MARY STUART and MARGARET HOBLING: *Practical Ethics. A Sketch of the Moral Structure of Society*. *Routledge*, 18s. net.
- REIDAR THOMTE: *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion*. *Princeton University Press: Oxford University Press*, 18s. net.
- FRANK TILLYARD and F. N. BALL: *Unemployment Insurance in Great Britain 1911-48*. *Thames Bank*, 21s. net.

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